TL

Leon A. Zyblikiewicz
March, 1952

SELECTIONS FROM THE NOTE-BOOKS OF SAMUEL BUTLER

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PREFACE

THE Notes printed in this volume have been selected from *The Note-Books of Samuel Butler: selections arranged and edited by Henry Festing Jones* (1912).

I have always felt that the 1912 volume contains a large number of Notes that most of Butler's admirers are glad to read once, or even more than once, but to which they do not want to refer constantly.

On the other hand, I find that I, for one, turn to certain of the Notes over and over again, and therefore want to have the volume containing them always at hand. But the volume is a closely printed octavo of 450 pages, and I often discussed with the late Henry Festing Jones the desirability of a smaller volume of selections. He was entirely in favour of the plan, provided that he was not expected to do the further selection, and provided that the larger selection of 1912 was kept always in print.

I had made a beginning with the work before Festing Jones died, in October 1928, and have since completed it; and I must admit that I have found it a very much more difficult task than I had anticipated.

I have felt justified in persevering, however, by the encouragement of various friends, and by

what almost amounts to a direct suggestion on the part of the author himself. In 'To Critics and Others' (see *post*, p. 218), Butler, with an eye characteristically levelled on posterity, foresees that Nice People will take him willingly enough if they are not bored about him, and if they can have the cream of him. Further, he recommends that he should be boiled down, and that is what I have here tried to do.

I have omitted most of the scientific and metaphysical Notes, and many of those dealing with painting and music; as well as some sections which contain material left over after the writing of certain of his books, or intended to be used in sequels to them.

I have tried to keep the best of those which treat, in Butler's peculiarly stimulating way, of subjects which are of perennial interest and concern; and I have added a few passages from one or other of his published books which I wished to make easily accessible.

A. T. Bartholomew.

9 Millington Road,
Cambridge.
March 1930.

SELECTIONS FROM THE NOTE-BOOKS OF SAMUEL BUTLER

I

LORD, WHAT IS MAN?

★

MAN

i

We are like billiard balls in a game played by unskilful players, continually being nearly sent into a pocket, but hardly ever getting right into one, except by a fluke.

ii

We are like thistle-down blown about by the wind – up and down, here and there – but not one in a thousand ever getting beyond seed-hood.

iii

A man is a passing mood coming and going in the mind of his country; he is the twitching of a nerve, a smile, a frown, a thought of shame or honour, as it may happen.

iv

How loosely our thoughts must hang together when the whiff of a smell, a band playing in the street, a face seen in the fire, or on the gnarled stem of a tree, will lead them into such vagaries at a moment's warning.

v

When I was a boy at school at Shrewsbury, old Mrs. Brown used to keep a tray of spoiled tarts which she sold cheaper. They most of them looked pretty right till you handled them. We are all spoiled tarts.

vi

He is a poor creature who does not believe himself to be better than the whole world else. No matter how ill we may be, or how low we may have fallen, we would not change identity with any other person. Hence our self-conceit sustains and always must sustain us till death takes us and our conceit together so that we need no more sustaining.

vii

Man must always be a consuming fire or be consumed. As for hell, we are in a burning fiery furnace all our lives – for what is life but a process of combustion?

LIFE

i

We have got into life by stealth and *petitio principii*, by the free use of that contradiction in terms which we declare to be the most outrageous

violation of our reason. We have wriggled into it by holding that everything is both one and many, both infinite in time and space and yet finite, both like and unlike to the same thing, both itself and not itself, both free and yet inexorably fettered, both every adjective in the dictionary and at the same time the flat contradiction of every one of them.

ii

The beginning of life is the beginning of an illusion to the effect that there is such a thing as free will and that there is such another thing as necessity – the recognition of the fact that there is an 'I can' and an 'I cannot,' an 'I may' and an 'I must.'

iii

Life is not so much a riddle to be read as a Gordian knot that will get cut sooner or later.

iv

Life is the distribution of an error – or errors.

v

Life is a superstition. But superstitions are not without their value. The snail's shell is a superstition, slugs have no shells and thrive just as well. But a snail without a shell would not be a

slug unless it had also the slug's indifference to a shell.

vi

Life is one long process of getting tired.

vii

My days run through me as water through a sieve.

viii

Life is the art of drawing sufficient conclusions from insufficient premises.

ix

Life is eight parts cards and two parts play, the unseen world is made manifest to us in the play.

x

Lizards generally seem to have lost their tails by the time they reach middle life. So have most men.

xi

A sense of humour keen enough to show a man his own absurdities, as well as those of other people, will keep him from the commission of all sins, or nearly all, save those that are worth committing.

xii

Life is like music, it must be composed by ear, feeling, and instinct, not by rule. Nevertheless one had better know the rules, for they sometimes guide in doubtful cases – though not often.

xiii

There are two great rules of life, the one general and the other particular. The first is that every one can, in the end, get what he wants if he only tries. This is the general rule. The particular rule is that every individual is, more or less, an exception to the general rule.

xiv

Nature is essentially mean, mediocre. You can have schemes for raising the level of this mean, but not for making every one two inches taller than his neighbour, and this is what people really care about.

xv

All progress is based upon a universal innate desire on the part of every organism to live beyond its income.

THE WORLD

i

The world is a gambling-table so arranged that all who enter the casino must play and all must

lose more or less heavily in the long run, though they win occasionally by the way.

ii

We play out our days as we play out cards, taking them as they come. not knowing what they will be, hoping for a lucky card and sometimes getting one, often getting just the wrong one.

iii

The world may not be particularly wise – still, we know of nothing wiser.

iv

The world will always be governed by self-interest. We should not try to stop this, we should try to make the self-interest of cads a little more coincident with that of decent people.

THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE WORLD

There is an eternal antagonism of interest between the individual and the world at large. The individual will not so much care how much he may suffer in this world provided he can live in men's good thoughts long after he has left it. The world at large does not so much care how much suffering the individual may either endure or cause in this life, provided he will take himself

clean away out of men's thoughts, whether for good or ill, when he has left it.

MY LIFE

i

I imagine that life can give nothing much better or much worse than what I have myself experienced. I should say I had proved pretty well the extremes of mental pleasure and pain; and so I believe each in his own way does almost every man.

ii

I have squandered my life as a schoolboy squanders a tip. But then half, or more than half the fun a schoolboy gets out of a tip consists in the mere fact of having something to squander. Squandering is in itself delightful, and so I found it with my life in my younger days. I do not squander it now, but I am not sorry that I have squandered a good deal of it. What a heap of rubbish there would have been if I had not! Had I not better set about squandering what is left of it?

THE LIFE WE LIVE IN OTHERS

A man should spend his life or, rather, does spend his life in being born. His life is his birth

throes. But most men miscarry and never come to the true birth at all, and some live but a very short time in a very little world, and none are eternal. Still, the life we live beyond the grave is our truest life, and our happiest, for we pass it in the profoundest sleep as though we were children in our cradles. If we are wronged it hurts us not; if we wrong others, we do not suffer for it; and when we die, as even the Handels and Bellinis and Shakespeares sooner or later do, we die easily, know neither fear nor pain and live anew in the lives of those who have been begotten of our work and who have for the time come up in our room.

An immortal like Shakespeare knows nothing of his own immortality about which we are so keenly conscious. As he knows nothing of it when it is in its highest vitality, centuries, it may be, after his apparent death, so it is best and happiest if during his bodily life he should think little or nothing about it and perhaps hardly suspect that he will live after his death at all.

And yet I do not know – I could not keep myself going at all if I did not believe that I was likely to inherit a good average threescore years and ten of immortality. There are very few workers who are not sustained by this belief, or at least hope, but it may well be doubted whether this is not a sign that they are not going to be

immortal – and I am content (or try to be) to fare as my neighbours.

THE WORLD MADE TO ENJOY

When we grumble about the vanity of all human things, inasmuch as even the noblest works are not eternal but must become sooner or later as though they had never been, we should remember that the world, so far as we can see, was made to enjoy rather than to last. Come-and-go pervades everything of which we have knowledge, and though great things go more slowly, they are built up of small ones and must fare as that which makes them.

Are we to have our enjoyment of Handel and Shakespeare weakened because a day will come when there will be no more of either Handel or Shakespeare nor yet of ears to hear them? Is it not enough that they should stir such countless multitudes so profoundly and kindle such intense and affectionate admiration for so many ages as they have done and probably will continue to do? The life of a great thing may be so long as practically to come to immortality even now, but that is not the point. The point is that if anything was aimed at at all when things began to shape or to be shaped, it seems to have been a short life and a merry one, with an extension of time in certain

favoured cases, rather than a permanency even of the very best and noblest. And, when one comes to think of it, death and birth are so closely correlated that one could not destroy either without destroying the other at the same time. It is extinction that makes creation possible.

If, however, any work is to have long life it is not enough that it should be good of its kind. Many ephemeral things are perfect in their way. It must be of a durable kind as well.

LIVING IN OTHERS

We had better live in others as much as we can if only because we thus live more in the race, which God really does seem to care about a good deal, and less in the individual, to whom, so far as I can see, he is indifferent. After we are dead it matters not to the life we have led in ourselves what people may say of us, but it matters much to the life we lead in others, and this should be our true life.

KARMA

When I am inclined to complain about having worked so many years and taken nothing but debt, though I feel the want of money so continually (much more, doubtless, than I ought to feel it), let me remember that I come in free, gratis, to the

work of hundreds and thousands of better men than myself who often were much worse paid than I have been. If a man's true self is his karma – the life which his work lives but which he knows very little about and by which he takes nothing – let him remember at least that he can enjoy the karma of others, and this about squares the account – or rather far more than squares it.

BIRTH AND DEATH

i

They are functions one of the other, and if you get rid of one you must get rid of the other also. There is birth in death and death in birth. We are always dying and being born again.

ii

Life is the gathering of waves to a head; at death they break into a million fragments each one of which, however, is absorbed at once into the sea of life and helps to form a later generation which comes rolling on till it too breaks.

iii

What happens to you when you die? But what happens to you when you are born? In the one case we are born and in the other we die, but it is not possible to get much further.

iv

We commonly know that we are going to die though we do not know that we are going to be born. But are we sure this is so? We may have had the most gloomy forebodings on this head and forgotten all about them. At any rate we know no more about the very end of our lives than about the very beginning. We come up unconsciously, and go down unconsciously; and we rarely see either birth or death. We see people, as consciousness, between the two extremes.

REPRODUCTION

Its base must be looked for not in the desire of the parents to reproduce but in the discontent of the germs with their surroundings inside those parents, and a desire on their part to have a separate maintenance.

THINKING ALMOST IDENTICALLY

The ova, spermatozoa, and embryos not only of all human races but of all things that live, whether animal or vegetable, think little, but that little almost identically on every subject. That 'almost' is the little rift within the lute which by and by will give such different character to the music.

IS LIFE WORTH LIVING?

This is a question for an embryo, not for a man.

EVACUATIONS

There is a resemblance, greater or less, between the pleasure we derive from all the evacuations. I believe that in all cases the pleasure arises from rest – rest, that is to say, from the considerable, though in most cases unconscious labour of retaining that which it is a relief to us to be rid of.

In ordinary cases the effort whereby we retain those things that we would get rid of is unperceived by the central government, being, I suppose, departmentally made; we – as distinguished from the subordinate personalities of which we are composed – know nothing about it, though the subordinates in question doubtless do. But when the desirability of removing is abnormally great, we know about the effort of retaining perfectly well, and the gradual increase in our perception of the effort suggests strongly that there has been effort all the time, descending to conscious and great through unconscious and normal from unconscious and hardly any at all. The relaxation of this effort is what causes the sense of refreshment that follows all healthy discharges.

All our limbs and sensual organs, in fact our whole body and life, are but an accretion round and a fostering of the spermatozoa. They are the real 'He.' A man's eyes, ears, tongue, nose, legs, and arms are but so many organs and tools that minister to the protection, education, increased intelligence and multiplication of the spermatozoa; so that our whole life is in reality a series of complex efforts in respect of these, conscious or unconscious according to their comparative commonness. They are the central fact in our existence, the point towards which all effort is directed. Relaxation of effort here, therefore, is the most complete and comprehensive of all relaxations and, as such, the supreme gratification – the most complete rest we can have, short of sleep and death.

MAN AND HIS ORGANISM

i

Man is but a perambulating tool-box and workshop, or office, fashioned for itself by a piece of very clever slime, as the result of long experience; and truth is but its own most enlarged, general, and enduring sense of the coming togetherness or con-venience of the various conventional arrangements which, for some reason or other, it

has been led to sanction. Hence we speak of man's body as his 'trunk.'

ii

The body is but a pair of pincers set over a bellows and a stewpan and the whole fixed upon stilts.

iii

A man should see himself as a kind of tool-box; this is simple enough; the difficulty is that it is the tools themselves that make and work the tools. The skill which now guides our organs and us in arts and inventions was at one time exercised upon the invention of these very organs themselves. Tentative bankruptcy acts afford good illustrations of the manner in which organisms have been developed. The ligaments which bind the tendons of our feet or the valves of our blood vessels are the ingenious enterprises of individual cells who saw a want, felt that they could supply it, and have thus won themselves a position among the old aristocracy of the body politic.

The most incorporate tool – as an eye or a tooth or the fist, when a blow is struck with it – has still something of the *non-ego* about it; and in like manner such a tool as a locomotive engine, apparently entirely separated from the body, must still from time to time, as it were, kiss the soil of

the human body and be handled, and thus become incorporate with man, if it is to remain in working order.

LIFE AND DEATH

Though we think so much of our body, it is in reality a small part of us. Before birth we get together our tools, in life we use them, and thus fashion our true life which consists not in our tools and tool-box but in the work we have done with our tools.

The whole life of some people is a kind of partial death – a long, lingering death-bed, so to speak, of stagnation and nonentity on which death is but the seal, or solemn signing, as the abnegation of all further act and deed on the part of the signer. Death robs these people of even that little strength which they appeared to have and gives them nothing but repose.

On others, again, death confers a more living kind of life than they can ever possibly have enjoyed while to those about them they seemed to be alive. Look at Shakespeare; can he be properly said to have lived in anything like his real life till a hundred years or so after his death? His physical life was but as a dawn preceding the sunrise of that life of the world to come which he was to enjoy hereafter. True, there was a little stir – a little abiding of shepherds in the fields, keeping

watch over their flocks by night – a little buzzing in knots of men waiting to be hired before the daybreak – a little stealthy movement as of a burglar or two here and there – an inchoation of life. But the true life of the man was after death and not before it.

Death is not more the end of some than it is the beginning of others. So he that loses his soul may find it, and he that finds may lose it.

II

ELEMENTARY MORALITY

★

THE FOUNDATIONS OF MORALITY

i

These are like all other foundations; if you dig too much about them the superstructure will come tumbling down.

ii

The foundations which we would dig about and find are within us, like the Kingdom of Heaven, rather than without.

iii

To attempt to get at the foundations is to try to recover consciousness about things that have passed into the unconscious stage; it is pretty sure to disturb and derange those who try it on too much.

COUNSELS OF IMPERFECTION

It is all very well for mischievous writers to maintain that we cannot serve God and Mammon. Granted that it is not easy, but nothing that is worth doing ever is easy. Easy or difficult, possible or impossible, not only has the thing got to be done, but it is exactly in doing it that the whole

duty of man consists. And when the righteous man turneth away from his righteousness that he hath committed and doeth that which is neither quite lawful nor quite right, he will generally be found to have gained in amiabilty what he has lost in holiness.

If there are two worlds at all (and that there are I have no doubt) it stands to reason that we ought to make the best of both of them, and more particularly of the one with which we are most immediately concerned. It is as immoral to be too good as to be too anything else. The Christian morality is just as immoral as any other. It is at once very moral and very immoral. How often do we not see children ruined through the virtues, real or supposed, of their parents? Truly he visiteth the virtues of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation. The most that can be said for virtue is that there is a considerable balance in its favour, and that it is a good deal better to be for it than against it; but it lets people in very badly sometimes.

If you wish to understand virtue you must be sub-vicious; for the really virtuous man, who is fully under grace, will be virtuous unconsciously and will know nothing about it. Unless a man is out-and-out virtuous he is sub-vicious.

Virtue is, as it were, the repose of sleep or death. Vice is the awakening to the knowledge

of good and evil – without which there is no life worthy of the name. Sleep is, in a way, a happier, more peaceful state than waking and, in a way, death may be said to be better than life, but it is in a very small way. We feel such talk to be blasphemy against good life and, whatever we may say in death's favour, so long as we do not blow our brains out we show that we do not mean to be taken seriously. To know good, other than as a heavy sleeper, we must know vice also. There cannot, as Bacon said, be a 'Hold fast that which is good' without a 'Prove all things' going before it. There is no knowledge of good without a knowledge of evil also, and this is why all nations have devils as well as gods, and regard them with sneaking kindness. God without the devil is dead, being alone.

LUCIFER

We call him at once the Angel of Light and the Angel of Darkness: is this because we instinctively feel that no one can know much till he has sinned much – or because we feel that extremes meet, or how?

GOD'S LAWS

The true laws of God are the laws of our own well-being.

PHYSICAL EXCELLENCE

The question whether such and such a course of conduct does or does not do physical harm is the safest test by which to try the question whether it is moral or no. If it does no harm to the body we ought to be very chary of calling it immoral, while if it tends towards physical excellence there should be no hesitation in calling it moral. In the case of those who are not forced to over-work themselves – and there are many who work themselves to death from mere inability to restrain the passion for work, which masters them as the craving for drink masters a drunkard – over-work in these cases is as immoral as over-eating or drinking. This, so far as the individual is concerned. With regard to the body politic as a whole it is, no doubt, well that there should be some men and women so built that they cannot be stopped from working themselves to death, just as it is unquestionably well that there should be some who cannot be stopped from drinking themselves to death, if only that they may keep the horror of the habit well in evidence.

INTELLECTUAL SELF-INDULGENCE

Intellectual over-indulgence is the most gratuitous and disgraceful form which excess can take, nor is there any the consequences of which are more disastrous.

VICE AND VIRTUE

i

Virtue is something which it would be impossible to over-rate if it had not been over-rated. The world can ill spare any vice which has obtained long and largely among civilised people. Such a vice must have some good along with its deformities. The question, 'How, if every one were to do so and so?' may be met with another 'How, if no one were to do it?' We are a body corporate as well as a collection of individuals.

As a matter of private policy I doubt whether the moderately vicious are more unhappy than the moderately virtuous; 'Very vicious' is certainly less happy than 'Tolerably virtuous,' but this is about all. What pass muster as the extremes of virtue probably make people quite as unhappy as extremes of vice do.

The truest virtue has ever inclined toward excess rather than asceticism; that she should do this is reasonable as well as observable, for virtue should be as nice a calculator of chances as other people and will make due allowance for the chance of not being found out. Virtue knows that it is impossible to get on without compromise, and tunes herself, as it were, a trifle sharp to allow for an inevitable fall in playing. So the Psalmist says, 'If thou, Lord, will be extreme to mark what is

done amiss: O Lord who may abide it?' and by this he admits that the highest conceivable form of virtue still leaves room for some compromise with vice. So again Shakespeare writes, 'They say, best men are moulded out of faults; and, for the most, become much more the better for being a little bad.'

ii

The extremes of vice and virtue are alike detestable: absolute virtue is as sure to kill a man as absolute vice is, let alone the dullnesses of it and the pomposities of it.

iii

God does not intend people, and does not like people, to be too good. He likes them neither too good nor too bad, but a little too bad is more venial with him than a little too good.

iv

As there is less difference than we generally think between the happiness of men who seem to differ widely in fortune, so is there also less between their moral natures; the best are not so much better than the worst, nor the worst so much below the best as we suppose; and the bad are just as important an element in the general progress as the good, or perhaps more so. It is

in strife that life lies, and were there no opposing forces there would be neither moral nor immoral, neither victory nor defeat.

v

If virtue had everything her own way she would be as insufferable as dominant factions generally are. It is the function of vice to keep virtue within reasonable bounds.

vi

Virtue has never yet been adequately represented by any who have had any claim to be considered virtuous. It is the sub-vicious who best understand virtue. Let the virtuous people stick to describing vice – which they can do well enough.

SIN

Sin is like a mountain with two aspects according to whether it is viewed before or after it has been reached: yet both aspects are real.

MORALITY

Morality is the custom of one's country and the current feeling of one's peers. Cannibalism is moral in a cannibal country.

THE FAMILY

I believe that more unhappiness comes from this source than from any other – I mean from the attempt to prolong family connection unduly and to make people hang together artificially who would never naturally do so. The mischief among the lower classes is not so great, but among the middle and upper classes it is killing a large number daily. And the old people do not really like it much better than the young.

MELCHIZEDEK

He was a really happy man. He was without father, without mother, and without descent. He was an incarnate bachelor. He was a born orphan.

GOD AND MAN

To love God is to have good health, good looks, good sense, experience, a kindly nature, and a fair balance of cash in hand. 'We know that all things work together for good to them that love God.' To be loved by God is the same as to love Him. We love Him because He first loved us.

GOOD BREEDING THE 'SUMMUM BONUM'

When people ask what faith we would substitute for that which we would destroy, we answer

that we destroy no faith and need substitute none. We hold the glory of God to be the *summum bonum*, and so do Christians generally. It is on the question of what is the glory of God that we join issue. We say it varies with the varying phases of God as made manifest in his works, but that, so far as we are ourselves concerned, the glory of God is best advanced by advancing that of man. If asked what is the glory of man we answer 'Good breeding' – using the words in their double sense and meaning both the continuance of the race and that grace of manner which the words are more commonly taken to signify. The double sense of the words is all the more significant for the unconsciousness with which it is passed over.

ADVICE TO THE YOUNG

You will sometimes find your elders laying their heads together and saying what a bad thing it is for young men to come into a little money – that those always do best who have no expectancy, and the like. They will then quote some drivel from one of the Kingsleys about the deadening effect an income of £300 a year will have upon a man. Avoid any one whom you may hear talk in this way. The fault lies not with the legacy (which would certainly be better if there were more of it)

but with those who have so mismanaged our education that we go in even greater danger of losing the money than other people are.

RELIGION

Is there any religion whose followers can be pointed to as distinctly more amiable and trustworthy than those of any other? If so, this should be enough. I find the nicest and best people generally profess no religion at all, but are ready to like the best men of all religions.

FAITH

Faith does not consist, as some have falsely urged, in believing things on insufficient evidence; this is not faith, but faithlessness to all that we should hold most faithfully. Faith consists in holding that the instincts of the best men and women are in themselves an evidence which may not be set aside lightly; and the best men and women have ever held that death is better than dishonour, and desirable if honour is to be won thereby.

HEAVEN AND HELL

Heaven is the work of the best and kindest men and women. Hell is the work of prigs, pedants, and professional truth-tellers. The world is an attempt to make the best of both.

PRIGGISHNESS

The essence of priggishness is setting up to be better than one's neighbour. Better may mean more virtuous, more clever, more agreeable, or what not. The worst of it is that one cannot do anything outside eating one's dinner or taking a walk without setting up to know more than one's neighbours. It was this that made me say in *Life and Habit* that I was among the damned in that I wrote at all. So I am; and I am often very sorry that I was never able to reach those more saintly classes who do not set up as instructors of other people. But one must take one's lot.

SWELLS

People ask complainingly what swells have done, or do, for society that they should be able to live without working. The good swell is the creature towards which all nature has been groaning and travailing together until now. He is an ideal. He shows what may be done in the way of good breeding, health, looks, temper, and fortune. He realises men's dreams of themselves, at any rate vicariously. He preaches the gospel of grace. The world is like a spoilt child, it has this good thing given it at great expense and then says it is useless!

SCIENCE AND RELIGION

These are reconciled in amiable and sensible people but nowhere else.

GENTLEMAN

If we are asked what is the most essential characteristic that underlies this word, the word itself will guide us to gentleness, to absence of such things as brow-beating, overbearing manners and fuss, and generally to consideration for other people.

NOBLENESS

I don't know what nobleness is any more than you do; but I imagine that to be noble a man must be strong in body and position, handsome, amorous, and kind; with a contempt for all the vices of meanness – and the meannesses of virtue.

MONEY

is the last enemy that shall never be subdued. While there is flesh there is money – or the want of money; but money is always on the brain so long as there is a brain in reasonable order.

MONEY, HEALTH, AND REPUTATION

Money, if it live at all, that is to say if it be reproductive and put out at any interest, however

low, is mortal and doomed to be lost one day, though it may go on living through many generations of one single family if it be taken care of. No man is absolutely safe. It may be said to any man, "Thou fool, this night thy money shall be required of thee." And reputation is like money: it may be required of us without warning. The little unsuspected evil on which we trip may swell up in a moment and prove to be the huge, Janus-like mountain of unpardonable sin. And his health may be required of any fool, any night or any day.

A man will feel loss of money more keenly than loss of bodily health, so long as he can keep his money. Take his money away and deprive him of the means of earning any more, and his health will soon break up; but leave him his money and, even though his health breaks up and he dies, he does not mind it so much as we think. Money losses are the worst, loss of health is next worst, and loss of reputation comes in a bad third. All other things are amusements provided money, health, and good name are untouched.

SOLICITORS

A man must not think he can save himself the trouble of being a sensible man and a gentleman by going to his solicitor, any more than he can get himself a sound constitution by going to his

doctor; but a solicitor can do more to keep a tolerably well-meaning fool straight than a doctor can do for an invalid. Money is to the solicitor what souls are to the parson or life to the physician. He is our money-doctor.

DOCTORS

Going to your doctor is having such a row with your cells that you refer them to your solicitor. Sometimes you, as it were, strike against them and stop their food, when they go on strike against yourself. Sometimes you file a bill in Chancery against them and go to bed.

PRIESTS

We may find an argument in favour of priests if we consider whether man is capable of doing for himself in respect of his moral and spiritual welfare (than which nothing can be more difficult and intricate) what it is so clearly better for him to leave to professional advisers in the case of his money and his body which are comparatively simple and unimportant.

THE BEST SPENT LIFE

He has spent his life best who has enjoyed it most; God will take care that we do not enjoy it any more than is good for us.

THE ESSENCE OF CHRISTIANITY

After all, what is the essence of Christianity? What is the kernel of the nut? Surely common sense and cheerfulness, with unflinching opposition to the charlatanisms and Pharisaisms of a man's own times. The essence of Christianity lies neither in dogma, nor yet in abnormally holy life, but in faith in an unseen world, in doing one's duty, in speaking the truth, in finding the true life rather in others than in oneself, and in the certain hope that he who loses his life on these behalfs finds more than he has lost.

III

ON THE MAKING OF BOOKS, PICTURES, AND MUSIC

*

THOUGHT AND WORD

i

Thought pure and simple is as near to God as we can get; it is through this that we are linked with God. The highest thought is ineffable; it must be felt from one person to another but cannot be articulated. All the most essential and thinking part of thought is done without words or consciousness. It is not till doubt and consciousness enter that words become possible.

The moment a thing is written, or even can be written, and reasoned about, it has changed its nature by becoming tangible, and hence finite, and hence it will have an end in disintegration. It has entered into death. And yet till it can be thought about and realised more or less definitely it has not entered into life. Both life and death are necessary factors of each other. But our profoundest and most important convictions are unspeakable.

So it is with unwritten and indefinable codes of honour, conventions, art-rules – things that can be felt but not explained – these are the most

important, and the less we try to understand them, or even to think about them, the better.

ii

Words are organised thoughts, as living forms are organised actions. How a thought can find embodiment in words is nearly, though perhaps not quite, as mysterious as how an action can find embodiment in form, and appears to involve a somewhat analogous transformation and contradiction in terms.

There was a time when language was as rare an accomplishment as writing was in the days when it was first invented. Probably talking was originally confined to a few scholars, as writing was in the middle ages, and gradually became general. Even now speech is still growing; poor folk cannot understand the talk of educated people. Perhaps reading and writing will indeed one day come by nature. Analogy points in this direction, and though analogy is often misleading, it is the least misleading thing we have.

iii

Communications between God and man must always be either above words or below them; for with words come in translations, and all the interminable questions therewith connected.

iv

The mere fact that a thought or idea can be expressed articulately in words involves that it is still open to question; and the mere fact that a difficulty can be definitely conceived involves that it is open to solution.

v

We want words to do more than they can. We try to do with them what comes to very much like trying to mend a watch with a pickaxe or to paint a miniature with a mop; we expect them to help us to grip and dissect that which in ultimate essence is as ungrippable as shadow. Nevertheless there they are; we have got to live with them, and the wise course is to treat them as we do our neighbours, and make the best and not the worst of them. But they are parvenu people as compared with thought and action. What we should read is not the words but the man whom we feel to be behind the words.

vi

Words impede and either kill, or are killed by, perfect thought; but they are, as a scaffolding, useful, if not indispensable, for the building up of imperfect thought and helping to perfect it.

vii

All words are juggles. To call a thing a juggle of words is often a bigger juggle than the juggle it is intended to complain of. The question is whether it is a greater juggle than is generally considered fair trading.

viii

Words are like money; there is nothing so useless, unless when in actual use.

ix

Gold and silver coins are only the tokens, symbols, outward and visible signs and sacraments of money. When not in actual process of being applied in purchase they are no more money than words not in use are language. Books are like imprisoned souls until some one takes them down from a shelf and reads them. The coins are potential money as the words are potential language, it is the power and will to apply the counters that make them vibrate with life; when the power and the will are in abeyance the counters lie dead as a log.

THE LAW

The written law is binding, but the unwritten law is much more so. You may break the written law at a pinch and on the sly if you can, but the

unwritten law – which often comprises the written – must not be broken. Not being written, it is not always easy to know what it is, but this has got to be done.

IDEAS

They are like shadows – substantial enough until we try to grasp them.

EXPRESSION

The fact that every mental state is intensified by expression is of a piece with the fact that nothing has any existence at all save in its expression.

DEVELOPMENT

All things are like exposed photographic plates that have no visible image on them till they have been developed.

ACQUIRED CHARACTERISTICS

If there is any truth in the theory that these are inherited – and who can doubt it? – the eye and the finger are but the aspiration, or word, made manifest in flesh.

TRAIL AND WRITING

Before the invention of writing the range of one man's influence over another was limited to

the range of sight, sound and scent; besides this there was trail, of many kinds. Trail unintentionally left is, as it were, hidden sight. Left intentionally, it is the unit of literature. It is the first mode of writing, from which grew that power of extending men's influence over one another by the help of written symbols of all kinds without which the development of modern civilisation would have been impossible.

CONVEYANCING AND THE ARTS

In conveyancing the ultimately potent thing is not the deed but the invisible intention and desire of the parties to the deed; the written document itself is only evidence of this intention and desire. So it is with music, the written notes are not the main thing, nor is even the heard performance; these are only evidences of an internal invisible emotion that can be felt but never fully expressed. And so it is with the words of literature and with the forms and colours of painting.

THE RULES FOR MAKING LITERATURE, MUSIC, AND PICTURES

The arts of the musician, the painter, and the writer are essentially the same. In composing a fugue, after you have exposed your subject, which must not be too unwieldly, you introduce an

episode or episodes which must arise out of your subject. The great thing is that all shall be new, and yet nothing new, at the same time; the details must minister to the main effect and not obscure it; in other words, you must have a subject, develop it and not wander from it very far. This holds just as true for literature and painting and for art of all kinds.

No man should try even to allude to the greater part of what he sees in his subject, and there is hardly a limit to what he may omit. What is required is that he shall say what he elects to say discreetly; that he shall be quick to see the gist of a matter, and give it pithily without either prolixity or stint of words.

MAKING NOTES

My notes always grow longer if I shorten them. I mean the process of compression makes them more pregnant and they breed new notes. I never try to lengthen them, so I do not know whether they would grow shorter if I did. Perhaps that might be a good way of getting them shorter.

SHORTENING

A young author is tempted to leave anything he has written through fear of not having enough to

say if he goes cutting out too freely. But it is easier to be long than short. I have always found compressing, cutting out, and tersifying a passage suggest more than anything else does. Things pruned off in this way are like the heads of the hydra, two grow for every one that is lopped off.

OMISSION

If a writer will go on the principle of stopping everywhere and anywhere to put down his notes, as the true painter will stop anywhere and everywhere to sketch, he will be able to cut down his works liberally. He will become prodigal not of writing – any fool can be this – but of omission. You become brief because you have more things to say than time to say them in. One of the chief arts is that of knowing what to neglect and the more talk increases the more necessary does this art become.

BREVITY

Brevity is not only the soul of wit, but the soul of making oneself agreeable and of getting on with people, and, indeed, of everything that makes life worth living. So precious a thing, however, cannot be got without more expense and trouble than most of us have the moral wealth to lay out.

ACCURACY

After having spent years striving to be accurate, we must spend as many more in discovering when and how to be inaccurate.

DIFFUSENESS

This sometimes helps, as, for instance, when the subject is hard; words that may be, strictly speaking, unnecessary still may make things easier for the reader by giving him more time to master the thought while his eye is running over the verbiage. So, a little water may prevent a strong drink from burning throat and stomach. A style that is too terse is as fatiguing as one that is too diffuse. But when a passage is written a little long, with consciousness and compunction but still deliberately, as what will probably be most easy for the reader, it can hardly be called diffuse.

DIFFICULTIES IN ART, LITERATURE, AND MUSIC

The difficult and the unintelligible are only conceivable at all in virtue of their catching on to something less difficult and less unintelligible and, through this, to things easily done and understood. It is at these joints in their armour that difficulties should be attacked.

Never tackle a serious difficulty as long as something which must be done, and about which you

see your way fairly well, remains undone; the settling of this is sure to throw light upon the way in which the serious difficulty is to be resolved. It is doing the What-you-can that will best help you to do the What-you-cannot.

Arrears of small things to be attended to, if allowed to accumulate, worry and depress like unpaid debts. The main work should always stand aside for these, not these for the main work, as large debts should stand aside for small ones, or truth for common charity and good feeling. If we attend continually and promptly to the little that we can do, we shall ere long be surprised to find how little remains that we cannot do.

KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

Yes, but it must be practical knowledge. There is nothing less powerful than knowledge unattached, and incapable of application. That is why what little knowledge I have has done myself personally so much harm. I do not know much, but if I knew a good deal less than that little I should be far more powerful. The rule should be never to learn a thing till one is pretty sure one wants it, or that one will want it before long so badly as not to be able to get on without it. This is what sensible people do about money, and there is no reason why people should throw away their

time and trouble more than their money. There are plenty of things that most boys would give their ears to know, these and these only are the proper things for them to sharpen their wits upon.

If a boy is idle and does not want to learn anything at all, the same principle should guide those who have the care of him – he should never be made to learn anything till it is pretty obvious that he cannot get on without it. This will save trouble both to boys and teachers, moreover it will be far more likely to increase a boy's desire to learn. I know in my own case no earthly power could make me learn till I had my head given me; and nothing has been able to stop me from incessant study from that day to this.

AGONISING

In art, never try to find out anything, or try to learn anything until the not knowing it has come to be a nuisance to you for some time. Then you will remember it, but not otherwise. Let knowledge importune you before you will hear it. Our schools and universities go on the precisely opposite system.

Never consciously agonise; the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong. Moments of extreme issue are unconscious and must be left to take care of themselves. During conscious moments take reasonable pains but no more and,

above all, work so slowly as never to get out of breath. Take it easy, in fact, until forced not to do so.

There is no mystery about art. Do the things that you can see; they will show you those that you cannot see. By doing what you can you will gradually get to know what it is that you want to do and cannot do, and so to be able to do it.

THE CHOICE OF SUBJECTS

Do not hunt for subjects, let them choose you, not you them. Only do that which insists upon being done and runs right up against you, hitting you in the eye until you do it. This calls you and you had better attend to it, and do it as well as you can. But till called in this way do nothing.

IMAGINARY COUNTRIES

Each man's mind is an unknown land to himself, so that we need not be at such pains to frame a mechanism of adventure for getting to undiscovered countries. We have not far to go before we reach them. They are, like the Kingdom of Heaven, within us.

MY BOOKS

I never make them: they grow; they come to me and insist on being written, and on being such

and such. I did not want to write *Erewhon*, I wanted to go on painting and found it an abominable nuisance being dragged willy-nilly into writing it. So with all my books – the subjects were never of my own choosing; they pressed themselves upon me with more force than I could resist. If I had not liked the subjects I should have kicked, and nothing would have got me to do them at all. As I did like the subjects and the books came and said they were to be written, I grumbled a little and wrote them.

NEW IDEAS

Every new idea has something of the pain and peril of childbirth about it; ideas are just as mortal and just as immortal as organised beings are.

BOOKS AND CHILDREN

If the literary offspring is not to die young, almost as much trouble must be taken with it as with the bringing up of a physical child. Still, the physical child is the harder work of the two.

THE LIFE OF BOOKS

Some writers think about the life of books as some savages think about the life of men – that there are books which never die. They all die sooner or later; but that will not hinder an author

from trying to give his book as long a life as he can get for it. The fact that it will have to die is no valid reason for letting it die sooner than can be helped.

CRITICISM

Critics generally come to be critics by reason not of their fitness for this but of their unfitness for anything else. Books should be tried by a judge and jury as though they were crimes, and counsel should be heard on both sides.

'LE STYLE C'EST L'HOMME'

It is with books, music, painting, and all the arts as with children – only those live that have drained much of their author's own life into them. The personality of the author is what interests us more than his work. When we have once got well hold of the personality of the author we care comparatively little about the history of the work or what it means or even its technique; we enjoy the work without thinking of more than its beauty and of how much we like the workman. 'Le style c'est l'homme' – that style of which, if I may quote from memory, Buffon, again, says that it is like happiness, and 'vient de la douceur de l'âme' – and we care more about knowing what kind of a person a man was than about knowing of his achievements, no matter how considerable

they may have been. If he has made it clear that he was trying to do what we like, and meant what we should like him to have meant, it is enough; but if the work does not attract us to the workman, neither does it attract us to itself.

PORTRAITS

A great portrait is always more a portrait of the painter than of the painted. When we look at a portrait by Holbein or Rembrandt it is of Holbein or Rembrandt that we think more than of the subject of their picture. Even a portrait of Shakespeare by Holbein or Rembrandt could tell us very little about Shakespeare. It would, however, tell us a great deal about Holbein or Rembrandt.

SINCERITY

It is not enough that the painter should make the spectator feel what he meant him to feel; he must also make him feel that this feeling was shared by the painter himself *bona fide* and without affectation. Of all the lies a painter can tell the worst is saying that he likes what he does not like. But the poor wretch seldom knows himself; for the art of knowing what gives us pleasure has been so neglected that it has been lost to all but a very few. The old Italians knew well enough what they liked and were as children in saying it.

A MAN'S STYLE

A man's style in any art should be like his dress – it should attract as little attention as possible. I never knew a writer yet who took the smallest pains with his style and was at the same time readable.

THE GAUNTLET OF YOUTH

Everything that is to age well must have run the gauntlet of its youth. Hardly ever does a work of art hold its own against time if it was not treated somewhat savagely at first – I should say 'artist' rather than 'work of art.'

GREATNESS IN ART

If a work of art – music, literature, or painting – is for all time, it must be independent of the conventions, dialects, costumes, and fashions of any time; if not great without help from such unessential accessories, no help from them can greaten it. A man must wear the dress of his own time, but no dressing can make a strong man of a weak one.

SUBJECT AND TREATMENT

It is often said that treatment is more important than subject, but no treatment can make a repulsive subject not repulsive. It can make a

trivial, or even a stupid, subject interesting, but a really bad flaw in a subject cannot be treated out. Happily the man who has sense enough to treat a subject well will generally have sense enough to choose a good one, so that the case of a really repulsive subject treated in a masterly manner does not often arise. It is often said to have arisen, but in nine cases out of ten the treatment will be found to have been over-praised.

PUBLIC OPINION

People say how strong it is; and indeed it is strong while it is in its prime. In its childhood and old age it is as weak as any other organism. I try to make my own work belong to the youth of a public opinion. The history of the world is the record of the weakness, frailty, and death of public opinion, as geology is the record of the decay of those bodily organisms in which opinions have found material expression.

A LITERARY MAN'S TEST

Molière's reading to his housemaid has, I think, been misunderstood as though he in some way wanted to see the effect upon the housemaid and make her a judge of his work. If she was an unusually clever, smart girl, this might be well

enough, but the supposition commonly is that she was a typical housemaid and nothing more.

If Molière ever did read to her, it was because the mere act of reading aloud put his work before him in a new light and, by constraining his attention to every line, made him judge it more rigorously. I always intend to read, and generally do read, what I write aloud to some one; any one almost will do, but he should not be so clever that I am afraid of him. I feel weak places at once when I read aloud where I thought, as long as I read to myself only, that the passage was all right.

WHAT AUDIENCE TO WRITE FOR

People between the ages of twenty and thirty read a good deal, after thirty their reading drops off and by forty is confined to each person's special subject, newspapers and magazines; so that the most important part of one's audience, and that which should be mainly written for, consists of specialists and people between twenty and thirty.

WRITING FOR A HUNDRED YEARS HENCE

When a man is in doubt about this or that in his writing, it will often guide him if he asks himself how it will tell a hundred years hence.

IV

CASH AND CREDIT

★

THE UNSEEN WORLD

I believe there is an unseen world about which we know nothing as firmly as any one can believe it. I see things coming up from it into the visible world and going down again from the seen world to the unseen. But my unseen world is to be *bona fide* unseen and, in so far as I say I know anything about it, I stultify myself. It should no more be described than God should be represented in painting or sculpture. It is as the other side of the moon; we know it must be there but we know also that, in the nature of things, we can never see it. Sometimes, some trifle of it may sway into sight and out again, but it is so little that it is not worth counting as having been seen.

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

The world admits that there is another world, that there is a kingdom, veritable and worth having, which, nevertheless, is invisible and has nothing to do with any kingdom such as we now see. It agrees that the wisdom of this other kingdom is foolishness here on earth, while the wisdom of the world is foolishness in the Kingdom of Heaven. In our hearts we know that the Kingdom

of Heaven is the higher of the two and the better worth living and dying for, and that, if it is to be won, it must be sought steadfastly and in singleness of heart by those who put all else on one side and, shrinking from no sacrifice, are ready to face shame, poverty, and torture here rather than abandon the hope of the prize of their high calling. Nobody who doubts any of this is worth talking with.

The question is, where is this Heavenly Kingdom, and what way are we to take to find it? Happily the answer is easy, for we are not likely to go wrong if in all simplicity, humility, and good faith we heartily desire to find it and follow the dictates of ordinary common sense.

THE PHILOSOPHER

He should have made many mistakes and been saved often by the skin of his teeth, for the skin of one's teeth is the most teaching thing about one. He should have been, or at any rate believed himself, a great fool and a great criminal. He should have cut himself adrift from society, and yet not be without society. He should have given up all, even Christ himself, for Christ's sake. He should be above fear or love or hate, and yet know them extremely well. He should have lost all save a small competence and know what a vantage ground it is to be an outcast. Destruction

and Death say they have heard the fame of Wisdom with their ears, and the philosopher must have been close up to these if he too would hear it.

THE ARTIST AND THE SHOPKEEPER

Most artists, whether in religion, music, literature, painting, or what not, are shopkeepers in disguise. They hide their shop as much as they can, and keep pretending that it does not exist, but they are essentially shopkeepers and nothing else. Why do I try to sell my books and feel regret at never seeing them pay their expenses if I am not a shopkeeper? Of course I am, only I keep a bad shop – a shop that does not pay.

In like manner, the professed shopkeeper has generally a taint of the artist somewhere about him which he tries to conceal as much as the professed artist tries to conceal his shopkeeping.

The business man and the artist are like matter and mind. We can never get either pure and without some alloy of the other.

MONEY

It is curious that money, which is the most valuable thing in life, *exceptis excipiendis*, should be the most fatal corrupter of music, literature, painting, and all the arts. As soon as any art is

pursued with a view to money, then farewell, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, all hope of genuine good work. If a man has money at his back, he may touch these things and do something which will live a long while, and he may be very happy in doing it; if he has no money, he may do good work, but the chances are he will be killed in doing it and for having done it; or he may make himself happy by doing bad work and getting money out of it, and there is no great harm in this, provided he knows his work is done in this spirit and rates it for its commercial value only. Still, as a rule, a man should not touch any of the arts as a creator unless he has a *discreta posizionina* behind him.

MODERN SIMONY

It is not the dealing in livings but the thinking they can buy the Holy Ghost for money which vulgar rich people indulge in when they dabble in literature, music, and painting.

Nevertheless, on reflection it must be admitted that the Holy Ghost is very hard to come by without money. For the Holy Ghost is only another term for the Fear of the Lord, which is Wisdom. And though Wisdom cannot be gotten for gold, still less can it be gotten without it. Gold, or the value that is equivalent to gold, lies at the root of Wisdom, and enters so largely into

the very essence of the Holy Ghost that 'No gold, no Holy Ghost,' may pass as an axiom. This is perhaps why it is not easy to buy Wisdom by whatever name it be called – I mean, because it is almost impossible to sell it. It is a very unmarketable commodity, as those who have received it truly know to their own great bane and boon.

TRYING TO KNOW

There are some things which it is madness not to try to know but which it is almost as much madness to try to know. Sometimes publishers, hoping to buy the Holy Ghost with a price, fee a man to read for them and advise them. This is but as the vain tossing of insomnia. God will not have any human being know what will sell, nor when any one is going to die, nor anything about the ultimate, or even the deeper, springs of growth and action, nor yet such a little thing as whether it is going to rain to-morrow. I do not say that the impossibility of being certain about these and similar matters was designed, but it is as complete as though it had been not only designed but designed exceedingly well.

MY GRANDFATHER AND MYSELF

My grandfather worked very hard all his life, and was making money all the time until he be-

came a bishop. I have worked very hard all my life, but have never been able to earn money. As usefulness is generally counted, no one can be more useless. This I believe to be largely due to the public-school and university teaching through which my grandfather made his money. Yes, but then if he is largely responsible for that which has made me useless, has he not also left me the hardly won money which makes my uselessness sufficiently agreeable to myself? And would not the poor old gentleman gladly change lots with me, if he could? I do not know; but I should be sorry to change lots with him or with any one else, so I need not grumble. I said in *Luck or Cunning?* that the only way (at least I think I said so) in which a teacher can thoroughly imbue an unwilling learner with his own opinions is for the teacher to eat the pupil up and thus assimilate him – if he can, for it is possible that the pupil may continue to disagree with the teacher. And as a matter of fact, schoolmasters do live upon their pupils, and I, as my grandfather's grandson, continue to batten upon old pupil.

GREAT THINGS

All men can do great things, if they know what great things are. So hard is this last that even where it exists the knowledge is as much unknown

as known to them that have it and is more a leaning upon the Lord than a willing of one that willeth. And yet all the leaning on the Lord in Christendom fails if there be not a will of him that willeth to back it up. God and the man are powerless without one another.

GENIUS AND PROVIDENCE

Among all the evidences for the existence of an overruling Providence that I can discover, I see none more convincing than the elaborate and for the most part effectual provision that has been made for the suppression of genius. The more I see of the world, the more necessary I see it to be that by far the greater part of what is written or done should be of so fleeting a character as to take itself away quickly. That is the advantage in the fact that so much of our literature is journalism.

Schools and colleges are not intended to foster genius and to bring it out. Genius is a nuisance, and it is the duty of schools and colleges to abate it by setting genius-traps in its way. They are as the artificial obstructions in a hurdle race – tests of skill and endurance, but in themselves useless. Still, so necessary is it that genius and originality should be abated that, did academies not exist, we should have to invent them.

THE ART OF COVERY

This is as important and interesting as Discovery. Surely the glory of finally getting rid of and burying a long and troublesome matter should be as great as that of making an important discovery. The trouble is that the coverer is like Samson who perished in the wreck of what he had destroyed; if he gets rid of a thing effectually he gets rid of himself too.

WANTED

We want a Society for the Suppression of Erudite Research and the Decent Burial of the Past. The ghosts of the dead past want quite as much laying as raising.

EPHEMERAL AND PERMANENT SUCCESS

It is a nice question whether the light or the heavy armed soldier of literature and art is the more useful. I joined the plodders and have aimed at permanent good name rather than brilliancy. I have no doubt I did this because instinct told me (for I never thought about it) that this would be the easier and less thorny path. I have more of perseverance than of those, perhaps, even more valuable gifts – facility and readiness of resource. I hate being hurried. Moreover, I

am too fond of independence to get on with the leaders of literature and science. Independence is essential for permanent but fatal to immediate success. Besides, luck enters much more into ephemeral than into permanent success and I have always distrusted luck. Those who play a waiting game have matters more in their own hands, time gives them double chances; whereas if success does not come at once to the ephemerid he misses it altogether.

MY BIRTHRIGHT

I had to steal my own birthright. I stole it and was bitterly punished. But I saved my soul alive.

V

'ENFANT TERRIBLE'

★

MYSELF

I am the *enfant terrible* of literature and science. If I cannot, and I know I cannot, get the literary and scientific big-wigs to give me a shilling, I can, and I know I can, heave bricks into the middle of them.

BLAKE, DANTE, VIRGIL, AND TENNYSON

Talking it over, we agreed that Blake was no good because he learnt Italian at sixty in order to study Dante, and we knew Dante was no good because he was so fond of Virgil, and Virgil was no good because Tennyson ran him, and as for Tennyson – well, Tennyson goes without saying.

MY FATHER AND SHAKESPEARE

My father is one of the few men I know who say they do not like Shakespeare. I could forgive my father for not liking Shakespeare if it was only because Shakespeare wrote poetry; but this is not the reason. He dislikes Shakespeare because he finds him so very coarse. He also says he likes Tennyson and this seriously aggravates his offence.

'ENFANT TERRIBLE'

WALTER PATER AND MATTHEW ARNOLD

Mr. Walter Pater's style is, to me, like the face of some old woman who has been to Madame Rachel and had herself enamelled. The bloom is nothing but powder and paint and the odour is cherry-blossom. Mr. Matthew Arnold's odour is as the faint sickliness of hawthorn.

MORAL TRY-YOUR-STRENGTHS

There are people who, if they only had a slot, might turn a pretty penny as moral try-your-strengths, like those we see in railway-stations for telling people their physical strength when they have dropped a penny in the slot. In a way they have a slot, which is their mouths, and people drop pennies in by asking them to dinner, and then they try their strength against them and get snubbed; but this way is roundabout and expensive. We want a good automatic asinometer by which we can tell at a moderate cost how great or how little of a fool we are.

'POPULUS VULT'

If people like being deceived – and this can hardly be doubted – there can rarely have been a time during which they can have had more of the wish than now. The literary, scientific, and

religious worlds vie with one another in trying to gratify the public.

GENUINE FEELING

In *The Times* of to-day, 4th June, 1887, there is an obituary notice of a Rev. Mr. Knight who wrote about 200 songs, among others 'She wore a wreath of roses.' *The Times* says that, though these songs have no artistic merit, they are full of genuine feeling, or words to this effect; as though a song which was full of genuine feeling could by any possibility be without artistic merit.

DIDEROT ON CRITICISM

'Il est si difficile de produire une chose même médiocre; il est si facile de sentir la médiocrité.'

I have lately seen this quoted as having been said by Diderot. It is easy to say we feel the mediocrity when we have heard a good many people say that the work is mediocre, but, unless in matters about which he has been long conversant, no man can easily form an independent judgement as to whether or not a work is mediocre. I know that in the matter of books, painting, and music I constantly find myself unable to form a settled opinion till I have heard what many men of varied tastes have to say, and have also made myself acquainted with details about a man's antecedents

and ways of life which are generally held to be irrelevant.

Often, of course, this is unnecessary; a man's character, if he has left much work behind him, or if he is not coming before us for the first time, is generally easily discovered without extraneous aid. We want no one to give us any clues to the nature of such men as Giovanni Bellini, or De Hooghe. Hogarth's character is written upon his work so plainly that he who runs may read it, so is Handel's upon his, so is Purcell's, so is Corelli's, so, indeed, are the characters of most men; but often where only little work has been left, or where a work is by a new hand, it is exceedingly difficult 'sentir la médiocrité' and, it might be added, 'ou même sentir du tout.'

How many years, I wonder, was it before I learned to dislike Thackeray and Tennyson as cordially as I now do? For how many years did I not almost worship them?

BUNYAN AND THE ODYSSEY

Anything worse than *The Pilgrim's Progress* in the matter of defiance of literary canons can hardly be conceived. The allegory halts continually; it professes to be spiritual, but nothing can be more carnal than the golden splendour of the eternal city; the view of life and the world generally is

flat blasphemy against the order of things with which we are surrounded. Yet, like the Odyssey, which flatly defies sense and criticism (no, it doesn't; still, it defies them a good deal), no one can doubt that it must rank among the very greatest books that have ever been written. How Odyssean it is in its sincerity and downrightness, as well as in the marvellous beauty of its language, its freedom from all taint of the schools, and, not least, in complete victory of genuine internal zeal over a scheme initially so faulty as to appear hopeless.

I read that part where Christian passes the lions which he thought were free but which were really chained and it occurred to me that all lions are chained until they actually eat us and that, the moment they do this, they chain themselves up again automatically, as far as we are concerned. If one dissects this passage it fares as many a passage in the Odyssey does when we dissect it. Christian did not, after all, venture to pass the lions till he was assured that they were chained. And really it is more excusable to refuse point-blank to pass a couple of lions till one knows whether they are chained or not – and the poor wicked people seem to have done nothing more than this – than it would be to pass them. Besides, by being told, Christian fights, as it were, with loaded dice.

POETRY

The greatest poets never write poetry. The Homers and Shakespeares are not the greatest – they are only the greatest that we can know. And so with Handel among musicians. For the highest poetry, whether in music or literature, is ineffable – it must be felt from one person to another, it cannot be articulated.

VERSE

Versifying is the lowest form of poetry; and the last thing a great poet will do in these days is to write verses.

I have been trying to read 'Venus and Adonis' and the 'Rape of Lucrece' but cannot get on with them. They teem with fine things, but they are got-up fine things. I do not know whether this is quite what I mean but, come what may, I find the poems bore me. Were I a schoolmaster I should think I was setting a boy a very severe punishment if I told him to read 'Venus and Adonis' through in three sittings. If, then, the magic of Shakespeare's name, let alone the great beauty of occasional passages, cannot reconcile us (for I find most people of the same mind) to verse, and especially rhymed verse, as a medium of sustained expression, what chance has anyone

else? It seems to me that a sonnet is the utmost length to which a rhymed poem should extend.

VERSE, POETRY, AND PROSE

The preface to Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* is verse, but it is not poetry. The body of the work is poetry, but it is not verse.

ANCIENT WORK

If a person would understand either the Odyssey or any other ancient work, he must never look at the dead without seeing the living in them, nor at the living without thinking of the dead. We are too fond of seeing the ancients as one thing and the moderns as another.

NAUSICAA AND MYSELF

I am elderly, grey-bearded, and, according to my clerk, Alfred, disgustingly fat; I wear spectacles and get more and more bronchitic as I grow older. Still no young prince in a fairy story ever found an invisible princess more effectually hidden behind a hedge of dullness or more fast asleep than Nausicaa was when I woke her and hailed her as Authoress of the Odyssey. And there was no difficulty about it either – all one had

to do was to go up to the front door and ring the bell.

TELEMACHUS AND NICHOLAS NICKLEBY

The virtuous young man defending a virtuous mother against a number of powerful enemies is one of the *ignes fatui* of literature. The scheme ought to be very interesting, and often is so, but it always fails as regards the hero who, from Telemachus to Nicholas Nickleby, is always too much of the good young man to please.

MY REVIEWERS' SENSE OF NEED

My reviewers felt no sense of need to understand me – if they had they would have developed the mental organism which would have enabled them to do so. When the time comes that they want to do so they will throw out a little mental pseudo-podium without much difficulty. They threw it out when they wanted to misunderstand me – with a good deal of the pseudo in it, too.

ENTERTAINING ANGELS

I doubt whether any angel would find me very entertaining. As for myself, if ever I do entertain one it will have to be unawares. When people entertain others without an introduction they generally turn out more like devils than angels.

TRANSLATIONS FROM VERSE INTO PROSE

Whenever this is attempted, great licence must be allowed to the translator in getting rid of all those poetical common forms which are foreign to the genius of prose. If the work is to be translated into prose, let it be into such prose as we write and speak among ourselves. A volume of poetical prose, *i.e.* affected prose, had better be in verse outright at once. Poetical prose is never tolerable for more than a very short bit at a time. And it may be questioned whether poetry itself is not better kept short in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred.

TRANSLATING THE ODYSSEY

If you wish to preserve the spirit of a dead author, you must not skin him, stuff him, and set him up in a case. You must eat him, digest him, and let him live in you, with such life as you have, for better or worse. The difference between the Andrew Lang manner of translating the Odyssey and mine is that between making a mummy and a baby. He tries to preserve a corpse (for the Odyssey is a corpse to all who need Lang's translation), whereas I try to originate a new life and one that is instinct (as far as I can effect this) with the spirit though not the form of the original.

GETTING IT WRONG

Zeffirino Carestia, a sculptor, told me we had a great sculptor in England named Simpson. I demurred, and asked about his work. It seemed he had made a monument to Nelson in Westminster Abbey. Of course I saw he meant Stevens, who had made a monument to Wellington in St. Paul's. I cross-questioned him and found I was right.

Suppose that in some ancient writer I had come upon a similar error about which I felt no less certain than I did here, ought I to be debarred from my conclusion merely by the accident that I have not the wretched muddler at my elbow and cannot ask him personally? People are always getting things wrong. It is the critic's business to know how and when to believe on insufficient evidence and to know how far to go in the matter of setting people right without going too far; the question of what is too far and what is sufficient evidence can only be settled by the higgling and haggling of the literary market.

VI

UNPROFESSIONAL SERMONS

★

RIGHTEOUSNESS

According to Mr. Matthew Arnold, as we find the highest traditions of grace, beauty, and the heroic virtues among the Greeks and Romans, so we derive our highest ideal of righteousness from Jewish sources. Righteousness was to the Jew what strength and beauty were to the Greek or fortitude to the Roman.

This sounds well, but can we think that the Jews taken as a nation were really more righteous than the Greeks and Romans? Could they indeed be so if they were less strong, graceful, and enduring? In some respects they may have been – every nation has its strong points – but surely there has been a nearly unanimous verdict for many generations that the typical Greek or Roman is a higher, nobler person than the typical Jew – and this referring not to the modern Jew, who may perhaps be held to have been injured by centuries of oppression, but to the Hebrew of the time of the old prophets and of the most prosperous eras in the history of the nation. If three men could be set before us as the most perfect Greek, Roman, and Jew respectively, and if we could choose which we would have our only son most

resemble, is it not likely we should find ourselves preferring the Greek or Roman to the Jew? And does not this involve that we hold the two former to be the more righteous in a broad sense of the word?

I dare not say that we owe no benefits to the Jewish nation, I do not feel sure whether we do or do not, but I can see no good thing that I can point to as a notoriously Hebrew contribution to our moral and intellectual well-being as I can point to our law and say that it is Roman, or to our fine arts and say that they are based on what the Greeks and Italians taught us. On the contrary, if asked what feature of post-Christian life we had derived most distinctly from Hebrew sources I should say at once 'intolerance' – the desire to dogmatise about matters whereon the Greek and Roman held certainty to be at once unimportant and unattainable. This, with all its train of bloodshed and family disunion, is chargeable to the Jewish rather than to any other account.

There is yet another vice which occurs readily to any one who reckons up the characteristics which we derive mainly from the Jews; it is one that we call, after a Jewish sect, 'Pharisaism.' I do not mean to say that no Greek or Roman was ever a sanctimonious hypocrite; still, sanctimoniousness does not readily enter into our notions of Greeks and Romans and it does so enter into our

notions of the old Hebrews. Of course, we are all of us sanctimonious sometimes; Horace himself is so when he talks about *aurum irrepertum et sic melius situm*, and as for Virgil he was a prig, pure and simple; still, on the whole, sanctimoniousness was not a Greek and Roman vice and it was a Hebrew one. True, they stoned their prophets freely; but these are not the Hebrews to whom Mr. Arnold is referring, they are the ones whom it is the custom to leave out of sight and out of mind as far as possible, so that they should hardly count as Hebrews at all, and none of our characteristics should be ascribed to them.

Taking their literature I cannot see that it deserves the praises that have been lavished upon it. The Song of Solomon and the book of Esther are the most interesting in the Old Testament, but these are the very ones that make the smallest pretensions to holiness, and even these are neither of them of very transcendent merit. They would stand no chance of being accepted by Messrs. Cassell and Co. or by any biblical publisher of the present day. Chatto and Windus might take the Song of Solomon, but, with this exception, I doubt if there is a publisher in London who would give a guinea for the pair. Ecclesiastes contains some fine things but is strongly tinged with pessimism, cynicism, and affectation. Some of the Proverbs are good, but not many of them are in

common use. Job contains some fine passages, and so do some of the Psalms; but the Psalms generally are poor and, for the most part, querulous, spiteful, and introspective into the bargain. Mudie would not take thirteen copies of the lot if they were to appear now for the first time – unless indeed their royal authorship were to arouse an adventitious interest in them, or unless the author were a rich man who played his cards judiciously with the reviewers. As for the prophets – we know what appears to have been the opinion formed concerning them by those who should have been best acquainted with them; I am no judge as to the merits of the controversy between them and their fellow-countrymen, but I have read their works and am of opinion that they will not hold their own against such masterpieces of modern literature as, we will say, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, *Robinson Crusoe*, *Gulliver's Travels*, or *Tom Jones*. 'Whether there be prophecies,' exclaims the Apostle, 'they shall fail.' On the whole I should say that Isaiah and Jeremiah must be held to have failed.

I would join issue with Mr. Matthew Arnold on yet another point. I understand him to imply that righteousness should be a man's highest aim in life. I do not like setting up righteousness, nor yet anything else, as the highest aim in life; a man should have any number of little aims about which

he should be conscious and for which he should have names, but he should have neither name for, nor consciousness concerning the main aim of his life. Whatever we do we must try and do it rightly – this is obvious – but righteousness implies something much more than this: it conveys to our minds not only the desire to get whatever we have taken in hand as nearly right as possible, but also the general reference of our lives to the supposed will of an unseen but supreme power. Granted that there is such a power, and granted that we should obey its will, we are the more likely to do this the less we concern ourselves about the matter and the more we confine our attention to the things immediately round about us which seem, so to speak, entrusted to us as the natural and legitimate sphere of our activity. I believe a man will get the most useful information on these matters from modern European sources; next to these he will get most from Athens and ancient Rome. Mr. Matthew Arnold notwithstanding, I do not think he will get anything from Jerusalem which he will not find better and more easily elsewhere.

WISDOM

'But where shall wisdom be found?' (Job xxviii, 12.)

If the writer of these words meant exactly

what he said, he had so little wisdom that he might well seek more. He should have known that Wisdom spends most of her time crying in the streets and public-houses, and he should have gone thither to look for her. It is written:

'Wisdom crieth without; she uttereth her voice in the streets:

'She crieth in the chief place of concourse, in the openings of the gates: in the city she uttereth her words.' (Prov. i, 20, 21.)

If however he meant rather 'Where shall wisdom be regarded?' this, again, is not a very sensible question. People have had Wisdom before them for some time, and they may be presumed to be the best judges of their own affairs, yet they do not generally show much regard for Wisdom. We may conclude, therefore, that they have found her less profitable than by her own estimate she would appear to be. This indeed is what one of the wisest men who ever lived – the author of the Book of Ecclesiastes – definitely concludes to be the case, when he tells his readers that they had better not overdo either their virtue or their wisdom. They must not, on the other hand, overdo their wickedness nor, presumably, their ignorance; still, the writer evidently thinks that error is safer on the side of too little than of too much.

Reflection will show that this must always

have been true, and must always remain so, for this is the side on which error is both least disastrous and offers most place for repentance. He who finds himself inconvenienced by knowing too little can go to the British Museum, or to the Working Men's College, and learn more; but when a thing is once well learnt it is even harder to unlearn it than it was to learn it. Would it be possible to unlearn the art of speech or the arts of reading and writing even if we wished to do so? Wisdom and knowledge are, like a bad reputation, more easily won than lost; we got on fairly well without knowing that the earth went round the sun; we thought the sun went round the earth until we found it made us uncomfortable to think so any longer, then we altered our opinion; it was not very easy to alter it, but it was easier than it would be to alter it back again. *Vestigia nulla retrorsum*; the earth itself does not pursue its course more steadily than mind does when it has once committed itself, and if we could see the movements of the stars in slow time we should probably find that there was much more throb and tremor in detail than we can take note of.

How, I wonder, will it be if in our pursuit of knowledge we stumble upon some awkward fact as disturbing for the human race as an enquiry into the state of his own finances may sometimes prove to the individual? The pursuit of know-

ledge can never be anything but a leap in the dark, and a leap in the dark is a very uncomfortable thing. I have sometimes thought that if the human race ever loses its ascendancy it will not be through plague, famine, or cataclysm, but by getting to know some little microbe, as it were, of knowledge which shall get into its system and breed there till it makes an end of us. It is well, therefore, that there should be a substratum of mankind who cannot by any inducement be persuaded to know anything whatever at all, and who are resolutely determined to know nothing among us but what the parson tells them, and not to be too sure even about that.

Whence then cometh wisdom and where is the place of understanding? How does Job solve his problem?

'Behold the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom: and to depart from evil is understanding.'

The answer is all very well as far as it goes, but it only amounts to saying that wisdom is wisdom. We know no better what the fear of the Lord is than what wisdom is, and we often do not depart from evil simply because we do not know that what we are cleaving to is evil.

LOVING AND HATING

I have often said that there is no true love short of eating and consequent assimilation; the em-

bryonic processes are but a long course of eating and assimilation – the sperm and germ cells, or the two elements that go to form the new animal, whatever they should be called, eat one another up, and then the mother assimilates them, more or less, through mutual inter-feeding and inter-breeding between her and them. But the curious point is that the more profound our love is the less we are conscious of it as love. True, a nurse tells her child that she would like to eat it, but this is only an expression that shows an instinctive recognition of the fact that eating is a mode of, or rather the acme of, love – no nurse loves her child half well enough to want really to eat it; put to such proof as this the love of which she is so profoundly, as she imagines, sentient proves to be but skin deep. So with our horses and dogs: we think we dote upon them, but we do not really love them.

What, on the other hand, can awaken less consciousness of warm affection than an oyster? Who would press an oyster to his heart, or pat it, and want to kiss it? Yet nothing short of its complete absorption into our own being can in the least satisfy us. No merely superficial temporary contact of exterior form to exterior form will serve us. The embrace must be consummate, not achieved by a mocking environment of draped and muffled arms that leaves no lasting trace on

organisation or consciousness, but by an enfolding within the bare and warm bosom of an open mouth – a grinding out of all differences of opinion by the sweet persuasion of the jaws, and the eloquence of a tongue that now convinces all the more powerfully because it is inarticulate and deals but with the one universal language of agglutination. Then we become made one with what we love – not heart to heart, but protoplasm to protoplasm, and this is far more to the purpose.

The proof of love, then, like that of any other pleasant pudding, is in the eating, and tested by this proof we see that consciousness of love, like all other consciousness, vanishes on becoming intense. While we are yet fully aware of it, we do not love as well as we think we do. When we really mean business and are hungry with affection, we do not know that we are in love, but simply go into the love-shop – for so any eating-house should be more fitly called – ask the price, pay our money down, and love till we can either love or pay no longer.

And so with hate. When we really hate a thing it makes us sick, and we use this expression to symbolise the utmost hatred of which our nature is capable; but when we know we hate, our hatred is in reality mild and inoffensive. I, for example, think I hate all those people whose photographs I see in the shop windows, but I am so conscious

of this that I am convinced, in reality, nothing would please me better than to be in the shop windows too. So when I see the universities conferring degrees on any one, or the learned societies moulting the yearly medals as peacocks moult their tails, I am so conscious of disapproval as to feel sure I should like a degree or a medal too if they would only give me one, and hence I conclude that my disapproval is grounded in nothing more serious than a superficial, transient jealousy.

THE ROMAN EMPIRE

Nothing will ever die so long as it knows what tc do under the circumstances, in other words so long as it knows its business. The Roman Empire must have died of inexperience of some kind, I should think most likely it was puzzled to death by the Christian religion. But the question is not so much how the Roman Empire or any other great thing came to an end – everything must come to an end some time, it is only scientists who wonder that a state should die – the interesting question is how did the Romans become so great, under what circumstances were they born and bred? We should watch childhood and schooldays rather than old age and death-beds.

As I sit writing on the top of a wild-beast pen

of the amphitheatre of Aosta I may note, for one thing, that the Romans were not squeamish, they had no Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. Again, their ladies did not write in the newspapers. Fancy Miss Cato reviewing Horace! They had no Frances Power Cobbes, no —s, no —s; yet they seem to have got along quite nicely without these powerful moral engines. The comeliest and most enjoyable races that we know of were the ancient Greeks, the Italians, and the South Sea Islanders, and they have none of them been purists.

ITALIANS AND ENGLISHMEN

Italians, and perhaps Frenchmen, consider first whether they like or want to do a thing and then whether, on the whole, it will do them any harm. Englishmen, and perhaps Germans, consider first whether they ought to like a thing and often never reach the questions whether they do like it and whether it will hurt. There is much to be said for both systems, but I suppose it is best to combine them as far as possible.

ON KNOWING WHAT GIVES US PLEASURE

One can bring no greater reproach against a man than to say that he does not set sufficient

value upon pleasure, and there is no greater sign of a fool than the thinking that he can tell at once and easily what it is that pleases him. To know this is not easy, and how to extend our knowledge of it is the highest and the most neglected of all arts and branches of education. Indeed, if we could solve the difficulty of knowing what gives us pleasure, if we could find its springs, its inception, and earliest *modus operandi*, we should have discovered the secret of life and development, for the same difficulty has attended the development of every sense from touch onwards, and no new sense was ever developed without pains. A man had better stick to known and proved pleasures, but, if he will venture in quest of new ones, he should not do so with a light heart.

One reason why we find it so hard to know our own likings is because we are so little accustomed to try; we have our likings found for us in respect of by far the greatest number of the matters that concern us; thus we have grown all our limbs on the strength of the likings of our ancestors and adopt these without question.

Another reason is that, except in mere matters of eating and drinking, people do not realise the importance of finding out what it is that gives them pleasure if, that is to say, they would make themselves as comfortable here as they reasonably

can. Very few, however, seem to care greatly whether they are comfortable or no. There are some men so ignorant and careless of what gives them pleasure that they cannot be said ever to have been really born as living beings at all. They present some of the phenomena of having been born – they reproduce, in fact, so many of the ideas which we associate with having been born that it is hard not to think of them as living beings – but in spite of all appearances the central idea is wanting. At least one half of the misery which meets us daily might be removed or, at any rate, greatly alleviated, if those who suffer by it would think it worth their while to be at any pains to get rid of it. That they do not so think is proof that they neither know, nor care to know, more than in a very languid way, what it is that will relieve them most effectually or, in other words, that the shoe does not really pinch them so hard as we think it does. For when it really pinches, as when a man is being flogged, he will seek relief by any means in his power. So my great namesake said, 'Surely the pleasure is as great of being cheated as to cheat'; and so, again, I remember to have seen a poem many years ago in *Punch* according to which a certain young lady, being discontented at home, went out into the world in quest to 'Some burden make or burden bear, but which she did not greatly care –

Oh Miseree!' So long as there was discomfort somewhere it was all right.

To those, however, who are desirous of knowing what gives them pleasure but do not quite know how to set about it I have no better advice to give than that they must take the same pains about acquiring this difficult art as about any other, and must acquire it in the same way – that is by attending to one thing at a time and not being in too great a hurry. Proficiency is not to be attained here, any more than elsewhere, by short cuts or by getting other people to do work that no other than oneself can do. Above all things it is necessary here, as in all other branches of study, not to think we know a thing before we do know it – to make sure of our ground and be quite certain that we really do like a thing before we say we do. When you cannot decide whether you like a thing or not, nothing is easier than to say so and to hang it up among the uncertainties. Or when you know you do not know and are in such doubt as to see no chance of deciding, then you may take one side or the other provisionally and throw yourself into it. This will sometimes make you uncomfortable, and you will feel you have taken the wrong side and thus learn that the other was the right one. Sometimes you will feel you have done right. Any way ere long you will know more about it. But there must have

been a secret treaty with yourself to the effect that the decision was provisional only. For, after all, the most important first principle in this matter is the not lightly thinking you know what you like till you have made sure of your ground. I was nearly forty before I felt how stupid it was to pretend to know things that I did not know and I still often catch myself doing so. Not one of my schoolmasters taught me this, but altogether otherwise.

SAINTS

Saints are always grumbling because the world will not take them at their own estimate; so they cry out upon this place and upon that, saying it does not know the things belonging to its peace and that it will be too late soon and that people will be very sorry then that they did not make more of the grumbler, whoever he may be, inasmuch as he will make it hot for them and pay them out generally.

All this means: 'Put me in a better social and financial position than I now occupy; give me more of the good things of this life, if not actual money yet authority (which is better loved by most men than even money itself), to reward me because I am to have such extraordinary good

fortune and high position in the world which is to come.'

When their contemporaries do not see this and tell them that they cannot expect to have it both ways, they lose their tempers, shake the dust from their feet and go sulking off into the wilderness.

This is as regards themselves; to their followers they say: 'You must not expect to be able to make the best of both worlds. The thing is absurd; it cannot be done. You must choose which you prefer, go in for it and leave the other, for you cannot have both.'

When a saint complains that people do not know the things belonging to their peace, what he really means is that they do not sufficiently care about the things belonging to his own peace.

PRAYER

i

'Lord, let me know mine end, and the number of my days: that I may be certified how long I have to live.' (Ps. xxxix, 5.)

Of all prayers this is the insanest. That the one who uttered it should have made and retained a reputation is a strong argument in favour of his

having been surrounded with courtiers. 'Lord, let me not know mine end' would be better, only it would be praying for what God has already granted us. 'Lord, let me know A.B.'s end' would be bad enough. Even though A.B. were Mr. Gladstone – we might hear he was not to die yet. 'Lord, stop A.B. from knowing my end' would be reasonable, if there were any use in praying that A.B. might not be able to do what he never can do. Or can the prayer refer to the other end of life? 'Lord, let me know my beginning.' This again would not be always prudent.

The prayer is a silly piece of petulance and it would have served the maker of it right to have had it granted. 'A painful and lingering disease followed by death' or 'Ninety, a burden to yourself and every one else' – there is not so much to pick and choose between them. Surely, 'I thank thee, O Lord, that thou hast hidden mine end from me' would be better. The sting of death is in foreknowledge of the when and the how.

If again he had prayed that he might be able to make his psalms a little more lively, and be saved from becoming the bore which he has been to so many generations of sick persons and young children – or that he might find a publisher for them with greater facility – but there is no end to it. The prayer he did pray was about the worst he could have prayed and the psalmist, being the

psalmist, naturally prayed it – unless I have misquoted him.

ii

Prayers are to men as dolls are to children. They are not without use and comfort, but it is not easy to take them very seriously. I dropped saying mine suddenly once for all without *malice prepense*, on the night of the 29th of September, 1859, when I went on board the *Roman Emperor* to sail for New Zealand. I had said them the night before and doubted not that I was always going to say them as I always had done hitherto. That night, I suppose, the sense of change was so great that it shook them quietly off. I was not then a sceptic; I had got as far as disbelief in infant baptism but no farther. I felt no compunction of conscience, however, about leaving off my morning and evening prayers – simply I could no longer say them.

iii

'Lead us not into temptation.' (Matt. vi, 13.)

For example: I am crossing from Calais to Dover and there is a well-known popular preacher on board, say Archdeacon Farrar.

I have my camera in my hand and though the sea is rough the sun is brilliant. I see the archdeacon come on board at Calais and seat himself

upon the upper deck, looking as though he had just stepped out of a band-box. Can I be expected to resist the temptation of snapping him? Suppose that in the train for an hour before reaching Calais I had said any number of times, 'Lead us not into temptation,' is it likely that the archdeacon would have been made to take some other boat or to stay in Calais, or that I myself, by being delayed on my homeward journey, should have been led into some other temptation, though perhaps smaller? Had I not better snap him and have done with it? Is there enough chance of good result to make it worth while to try the experiment? The general consensus of opinion is that there is not.

And as for praying for strength to resist temptation – granted that if, when I saw the archdeacon in the band-box stage, I had immediately prayed for strength I might have been enabled to put the evil thing from me for a time, how long would this have been likely to last when I saw his face grow saintlier and saintlier? I am an excellent sailor myself, but he is not, and when I see him there, his eyes closed and his head thrown back, like a sleeping St. Joseph in a shovel hat, with a basin beside him, can I expect to be saved from snapping him by such a formula as 'Deliver us from evil'? Is it in photographer's nature to do so? When David found himself in

the cave with Saul he cut off one of Saul's coat-tails; if he had had a camera and there had been enough light he would have photographed him; but would it have been in flesh and blood for him neither to cut off his coat-tail nor to snap him?

There is a photographer in every bush, going about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour.

iv

'Teach me to live that I may dread
The grave as little as my bed.'

This is from the evening hymn which all respectable children are taught. It sounds well, but it is immoral.

Our own death is a premium which we must pay for the far greater benefit we have derived from the fact that so many people have not only lived but also died before us. For if the old ones had not in course of time gone, there would have been no progress; all our civilisation is due to the arrangement whereby no man shall live for ever, and to this huge mass of advantage we must each contribute our mite; that is to say, when our turn comes we too must die. The hardship is that interested persons should be able to scare us into thinking the change we call death to be the

desperate business which they make it out to be. There is no hardship in having to suffer that change.

Bishop Ken, however, goes too far. Undesirable, of course, death must always be to those who are fairly well off, but it is undesirable that any living being should live in habitual indifference to death. The indifference should be kept for worthy occasions, and even then, though death be gladly faced, it is not healthy that it should be faced as though it were a mere undressing and going to bed.

VII

HIGGLEDY-PIGGLEDY

★

WASTE-PAPER BASKETS

Every one should keep a mental waste-paper basket and the older he grows the more things he will consign to it – torn up to irrecoverable tatters.

FLIES IN THE MILK-JUG

Saving scraps is like picking flies out of the milk-jug. We do not mind doing this, I suppose, because we feel sure the flies will never want to borrow money off us. We do not feel so sure about anything much bigger than a fly. If it were a mouse that had got into the milk-jug, we should call the cat at once.

MY THOUGHTS

They are like persons met upon a journey; I think them very agreeable at first but soon find, as a rule, that I am tired of them.

OUR IDEAS

They are for the most part like bad sixpences and we spend our lives in trying to pass them on one another.

CAT-IDEAS AND MOUSE-IDEAS

We can never get rid of mouse-ideas completely, they keep turning up again and again, and nibble, nibble – no matter how often we drive them off. The best way to keep them down is to have a few good strong cat-ideas which will embrace them and ensure their not reappearing till they do so in another shape.

INCOHERENCY OF NEW IDEAS

An idea must not be condemned for being a little shy and incoherent; all new ideas are shy when introduced first among our old ones. We should have patience and see whether the incoherency is likely to wear off or to wear on, in which latter case the sooner we get rid of them the better.

AN APOLOGY FOR THE DEVIL

It must be remembered that we have only heard one side of the case. God has written all the books.

HALLELUJAH

When we exclaim so triumphantly 'Hallelujah! for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth' we only mean that we think no small beer of ourselves, that our God is a much greater God than any one

else's God, that he was our father's God before us, and that it is all right, respectable, and as it should be.

HATING

It does not matter much what a man hates provided he hates something. The only things we really hate are unfamiliar things.

HAMLET, DON QUIXOTE, MR. PICKWICK, AND OTHERS

The great characters of fiction live as truly as the memories of dead men. For the life after death it is not necessary that a man or woman should have lived.

REPUTATION

The evil that men do lives after them. Yes, and a good deal of the evil that they never did as well.

SCIENCE AND BUSINESS

The best class of scientific mind is the same as the best class of business mind. The great desideratum in either case is to know how much evidence is enough to warrant action. It is as unbusiness-like to want too much evidence before buying or selling as to be content with too little. The same kind of qualities are wanted in either

case. The difference is that if the business man makes a mistake, he commonly has to suffer for it, whereas it is rarely that scientific blundering, so long as it is confined to theory, entails loss on the blunderer. On the contrary it very often brings him fame, money, and a pension. Hence the business man, if he is a good one, will take greater care not to overdo or underdo things than the scientific man can reasonably be expected to take.

SCIENTISTS

There are two classes, those who want to know and do not care whether others think they know or not, and those who do not much care about knowing but care very greatly about being reputed as knowing.

SCIENTIFIC TERMINOLOGY

This is the Scylla's cave which men of science are preparing for themselves to be able to pounce out upon us from it, and into which we cannot penetrate.

SCIENTISTS AND DRAPERS

Why should the botanist, geologist, or other-ist give himself such airs over the draper's assistant? Is it because he names his plants or specimens with

Latin names and divides them into genera and species, whereas the draper does not formulate his classifications, or at any rate only uses his mother tongue when he does? Yet how like the subdivisions of textile life are to those of the animal and vegetable kingdoms! A few great families – cotton, linen, hempen, woollen, silk, mohair, alpaca – into what an infinite variety of genera and species do not these great families subdivide themselves? And does it take less labour, with less intelligence, to master all these and to acquire familiarity with their various habits, habitats, and prices than it does to master the details of any other great branch of science? I do not know. But when I think of Shoolbred's on the one hand and, say, the ornithological collections of the British Museum upon the other, I feel as though it would take me less trouble to master the second than the first.

MEN OF SCIENCE

If they are worthy of the name they are indeed about God's path and about his bed and spying out all his ways.

SPARKS

Everything matters more than we think it does, and, at the same time, nothing matters so

much as we think it does. The merest spark may set all Europe in a blaze, but though all Europe be set in a blaze twenty times over, the world will wag itself right again.

DUMB-BELLS

I regard them with suspicion as academic.

PURGATORY

Time is the only true purgatory.

HEAVEN AND HELL

The Heaven of men's loving thoughts; the Hell of men's hatred and contempt.

GREATNESS

He is greatest who is most often in men's good thoughts.

THE VANITY OF HUMAN WISHES

There is only one thing vainer and that is the having no wishes.

JONES'S CONSCIENCE

He said he had not much conscience, and what little he had was guilty.

NIHILISM

The Nihilists do not believe in nothing; they only believe in nothing that does not commend itself to themselves; that is, they will not allow that anything may be beyond their comprehension. As their comprehension is not great their creed is, after all, very nearly nihil.

ON BREAKING HABITS

To begin knocking off the habit in the morning, then the afternoon as well, and, finally, the evening too is better than to begin cutting it off in the evening and then go on to the afternoon and morning. I speak from experience as regards smoking and can say that when one comes to within an hour or two of smoke-time one begins to be impatient for it, whereas there will be no impatience after the time for knocking off has been confirmed as a habit.

DOGS

The great pleasure of a dog is that you may make a fool of yourself with him and not only will he not scold you, but he will make a fool of himself too.

FUTURE AND PAST

The Will-be and the Has-been touch us more nearly than the Is. So we are more tender to-

wards children and old people than to those who are in the prime of life.

NATURE

As the word is now commonly used it excludes nature's most interesting productions – the works of man. Nature is usually taken to mean mountains, rivers, clouds, and undomesticated animals and plants. I am not indifferent to this half of nature, but it interests me much less than the other half.

LUCKY AND UNLUCKY

People are lucky and unlucky not according to what they get absolutely, but according to the ratio between what they get and what they have been led to expect.

DEFINITIONS

i

As, no matter what cunning system of checks we devise, we must in the end trust some one whom we do not check, but to whom we give unreserved confidence, so there is a point at which the understanding and mental processes must be taken as understood without further question or definition in words. And I should

say that this point should be fixed pretty early in the discussion.

ii

There is one class of mind that loves to lean on rules and definitions, and another that discards them as far as possible. A faddist will generally ask for a definition of faddism, and one who is not a faddist will be impatient of being asked to give one.

iii

A definition is the enclosing a wilderness of idea within a wall of words.

iv

Definitions are a kind of scratching and generally leave a sore place more sore than it was before.

v

As Love is too young to know what conscience is, so Truth and Genius are too old to know what definition is.

MONEY

It has such an inherent power to run itself clear of taint that human ingenuity cannot devise the

means of making it work permanent mischief, any more than means can be found of torturing people beyond what they can bear. Even if a man founds a College of Technical Instruction, the chances are ten to one that no one will be taught anything and that it will have been practically left to a number of excellent professors who will know very well what to do with it.

WIT

There is no Professor of Wit at either University. Surely they might as reasonably have a professor of wit as of poetry.

OXFORD AND CAMBRIDGE

The dons are too busy educating the young men to be able to teach them anything.

COOKING

There is a higher average of good cooking at Oxford and Cambridge than elsewhere. The cooking is better than the curriculum. But there is no Chair of Cookery, it is taught by apprenticeship in the kitchens.

PERSEUS AND ST. GEORGE

These dragon-slayers did not take lessons in dragon-slaying, nor do leaders of forlorn hopes

generally rehearse their parts beforehand. Small things may be rehearsed, but the greatest are always do-or-die, neck-or-nothing matters.

SPECIALISM AND GENERALISM

Woe to the specialist who is not a pretty fair generalist, and woe to the generalist who is not also a bit of a specialist.

LOGIC AND CONSISTENCY

Logic and Consistency are luxuries for the gods and the lower animals.

SILENCE AND TACT

Silence is not always tact and it is tact that is golden, not silence.

TRUTH-TELLERS

Professional truth-tellers may be trusted to profess that they are telling the truth.

MORAL INFLUENCE

Moral influence means persuading another that one can make that other more uncomfortable than that other can make oneself.

STREET PREACHERS

These are the costermongers and barrow men of the religious world.

PROVIDENCE AND OTHELLO

Providence, in making the rain fall also upon the sea, was like the man who, when he was to play Othello, must needs black himself all over.

PROVIDENCE AND IMPROVIDENCE

i

We should no longer say: Put your trust in Providence, but in Improvidence, for this is what we mean.

ii

To put one's trust in God is only a longer way of saying that one will chance it.

iii

There is nothing so imprudent or so improvident as over-prudence or over-providence.

EPIPHANY

If Providence could be seen at all, he would probably turn out to be a very disappointing person – a little wizened old gentleman with a cold in his head, a red nose, and a comforter round his neck, whistling o'er the furrow'd land or crooning to himself as he goes aimlessly along the streets, poking his way about and loitering continually at shop-windows and second-hand book-stalls.

FORTUNE

Like Wisdom, Fortune crieth in the streets, and no man regardeth. There is not an advertisement supplement to *The Times* – nay, hardly a half sheet of newspaper that comes into a house wrapping up this or that, but it gives information which would make a man's fortune, if he could only spot it and detect the one paragraph that would do this among the ninety-nine which would wreck him if he had anything to do with them.

GOLD-MINES

Gold is not found in quartz alone; its richest lodes are in the eyes and ears of the public, but these are harder to work and to prospect than any quartz vein.

THINGS AND PURSES

Everything is like a purse – there may be money in it, and we can generally say by the feel of it whether there is or is not. Sometimes, however, we must turn it inside out before we can be quite sure whether there is anything in it or no. When I have turned a proposition inside out, put it to stand on its head, and shaken it, I have often been surprised to find how much came out of it.

SOLOMON IN ALL HIS GLORY

But, in the first place, the lilies do toil and spin after their own fashion, and, in the next, it was not desirable that Solomon should be dressed like a lily of the valley.

S. MICHAEL

He contended with the Devil about the body of Moses. Now, I do not believe that any reasonable person would contend about the body of Moses with the Devil or with any one else.

ONE FORM OF FAILURE

From a worldly point of view there is no mistake so great as that of being always right.

ARGUMENT

Argument is generally waste of time and trouble. It is better to present one's opinion and leave it to stick or no as it may happen. If sound, it will probably in the end stick, and the sticking is the main thing.

SELF-CONFIDENCE

Nothing is ever any good unless it is thwarted with self-distrust though in the main self-confident.

IMAGINATION

Imagination can do any bloody thing almost.

WANDERING

When the inclination is not obvious, the mind meanders, or maunders, as a stream in a flat meadow.

POVERTY

I shun it because I have found it so apt to become contagious; but I fancy my constitution is more seasoned against it now than formerly. I hope that what I have gone through may have made me immune.

PEDALS OR DRONES

The discords of every age are rendered possible by being taken on a drone or pedal of cant, common form, and conventionality. This drone is, as it were, the flour and suet of a plum pudding.

EVASIVE NATURE

She is one long This-way-and-it-isness and, at the same time, That-way-and-it-isn'tness. She flies so like a snipe that she is hard to hit.

FASHION

Fashion is like God, man cannot see it in its holy of holies and live. And it is, like God,

increate, springing out of nothing, yet the maker of all things – ever changing yet the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

DOCTORS AND CLERGYMEN

A physician's physiology has much the same relation to his power of healing as a cleric's divinity has to his power of influencing conduct.

GOD IS LOVE

I dare say. But what a mischievous devil Love is!

COMMON CHORDS

If Man is the tonic and God the dominant, the Devil is certainly the sub-dominant and Woman is the relative minor.

ENJOYING MUSIC

To know whether you are enjoying a piece of music or not you must see whether you find yourself looking at the advertisements of Pears' soap at the end of the programme.

GOD AND THE DEVIL

God and the Devil are an effort after specialisation and division of labour.

SEX

The sexes are the first, or are among the first great experiments in the social subdivision of labour.

WOMEN

If you choose to insist on the analogies and points of resemblance between men and women, they are so great that the differences seem indeed small. If, on the other hand, you are in a mood for emphasising the points of difference, you can show that men and women have hardly anything in common. And so with anything: if a man wants to make a case he can generally find a way of doing so.

OFFERS OF MARRIAGE

Women sometimes say that they have had no offers, and only wish that some one had ever proposed to them. That is not the right way to put it. What they should say is that though, like all women, they have been proposing to men all their lives, yet they grieve to remember that they have been invariably refused.

MARRIAGE

i

The question of marriage or non-marriage is only the question of whether it is better to be spoiled one way or another.

ii

In matrimony, to hesitate is sometimes to be saved.

iii

Inoculation, or a hair of the dog that is going to bite you – this principle should be introduced in respect of marriage and speculation.

LIFE AND LOVE

To live is like to love – all reason is against it, and all healthy instinct for it.

THE BASIS OF LIFE

We may say what we will, but Life is, *au fond*, sensual.

WOMAN SUFFRAGE

I will vote for it when women have left off making a noise in the reading-room of the British Museum, when they leave off wearing high head-dresses in the pit of a theatre, and when I have seen as many as twelve women in all catch hold of the strap or bar on getting into an omnibus.

MANNERS MAKYTH MAN

Yes, but they make woman still more.

WOMEN AND RELIGION

It has been said that all sensible men are of the same religion and that no sensible man ever says what that religion is. So all sensible men are of the same opinion about women and no sensible man ever says what that opinion is.

HAPPINESS

Behold and see if there be any happiness like unto the happiness of the devils when they found themselves cast out of Mary Magdalene.

SORROW WITHIN SORROW

He was in reality damned glad; he told people he was sorry he was not more sorry, and here began the first genuine sorrow, for he was really sorry that people would not believe he was sorry that he was not more sorry.

GOING AWAY

I can generally bear the separation, but I don't like the leave-taking.

VIII

SKETCHES AND NOTES

★

LITERARY SKETCH-BOOKS

The true writer will stop everywhere and anywhere to put down his notes, as the true painter will stop everywhere and anywhere to sketch.

I do not see why an author should not have a sale of literary sketches, each one short, slight, and capable of being framed and glazed in small compass. They would make excellent library decorations and ought to fetch as much as an artist's sketches. They might be cut up in suitable lots, if the fashion were once set, and many a man might be making provision for his family at odd times with his notes as an artist does with his sketches.

LONDON

If I were asked what part of London I was most identified with after Clifford's Inn itself, I should say Fetter Lane – every part of it. Just by the Record Office is one of the places where I am especially prone to get ideas; so also is the other end, about the butcher's shop near Holborn. The reason in both cases is the same, namely, that I have about had time to settle down to

reflection after leaving, on the one hand, my rooms in Clifford's Inn and, on the other, Jones's rooms in Barnard's Inn where I usually spend the evening. The subject which has occupied my mind during the day being approached anew after an interval and a shake, some fresh idea in connection with it often strikes me. But long before I knew Jones, Fetter Lane was always a street which I was more in than perhaps any other in London. Leather Lane, the road through Lincoln's Inn Fields to the Museum, the Embankment, Fleet Street, the Strand, and Charing Cross come next.

A CLIFFORD'S INN EUPHEMISM

People when they want to get rid of their cats, and do not like killing them, bring them to the garden of Clifford's Inn, drop them there and go away. In spite of all that is said about cats being able to find their way so wonderfully, they seldom do find it, and once in Clifford's Inn the cat generally remains there. The technical word among the laundresses in the inn for this is, 'losing' a cat:

'Poor thing, poor thing,' said one old woman to me a few days ago, 'it's got no fur on its head at all, and no doubt that's why the people she lived with lost her.'

LONDON TREES

They are making a great outcry about the ventilators on the Thames Embankment, just as they made a great outcry about the Griffin in Fleet Street. They say the ventilators have spoiled the Thames Embankment. They do not spoil it half so much as the statues do – indeed, I do not see that they spoil it at all. The trees that are planted everywhere are, or will be, a more serious nuisance. Trees are all very well where there is plenty of room, otherwise they are a mistake; they keep in the moisture, exclude light and air, and their roots disturb foundations; most of our London Squares would look much better if the trees were thinned. I should like to cut down all the plane trees in the garden of Clifford's Inn and leave only the others.

THE GREAT BEAR'S BARLEY-WATER

Last night Jones was walking down with me from Staple Inn to Clifford's Inn, about 10 o'clock, and we saw the Great Bear standing upright on the tip of his tail which was coming out of a chimney pot. Jones said it wanted attending to. I said:

'Yes, but to attend to it properly we ought to sit up with it all night, and if the Great Bear thinks that I am going to sit by his bed-side and give him

a spoonful of barley-water every ten minutes, he will find himself much mistaken.'

THE COCK TAVERN

I went into Fleet Street one Sunday morning with my camera lucida to see whether I should like to make a sketch of the gap made by the demolition of the Cock Tavern. It was rather pretty, with an old roof or two behind and scaffolding about and torn paper hanging to an exposed party-wall and old fireplaces and so on, but it was not very much out of the way. Still I would have taken it if it had not been the Cock. I thought of all the trash that has been written about it and of Tennyson's plump head-waiter (who by the way used to swear that he did not know Tennyson and that Tennyson never did resort to the Cock) and I said to myself:

'No – you may go. I will put out no hand to save you.'

WINDOW CLEANING IN THE BRITISH MUSEUM READING-ROOM

Once a year or so the figures on the Assyrian bas-reliefs break adrift and may be seen, with their scaling ladders and all, cleaning the outside of the windows in the dome of the reading-room. It is very pretty to watch them and they would photograph beautifully. If I live to see them do

it again I must certainly snapshot them. You can see them smoking and sparring, and this year they have left a little hole in the window above the clock.

THE ELECTRIC LIGHT IN ITS INFANCY

I heard a woman in a bus boring her lover about the electric light. She wanted to know this and that, and the poor lover was helpless. Then she said she wanted to know how it was regulated. At last she settled down by saying that she knew it was in its infancy. The word 'infancy' seemed to have a soothing effect upon her, for she said no more but, leaning her head against her lover's shoulder, composed herself to slumber.

FIRE

I was at one the other night and heard a man say: 'That corner stack is alight now quite nicely.' People's sympathies seem generally to be with the fire so long as no one is in danger of being burned.

ADAM AND EVE

A little boy and a little girl were looking at a picture of Adam and Eve.

'Which is Adam and which is Eve?' said one.

'I do not know,' said the other, 'but I could tell if they had their clothes on.'

DOES MAMMA KNOW?

A father was telling his eldest daughter, aged about six, that she had a little sister, and was explaining to her how nice it all was. The child said it was delightful and added:

'Does Mamma know? Let's go and tell her.'

MR. DARWIN IN THE ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS

Frank Darwin told me his father was once standing near the hippopotamus cage when a little boy and girl, aged four and five, came up. The hippopotamus shut his eyes for a minute.

'That bird's dead," said the little girl; 'come along.'

TERBOURG

Gogin told me that Berg, an impulsive Swede whom he had known in Laurens's studio in Paris and who painted very well, came to London and was taken by an artist friend to the National Gallery where he became very enthusiastic about the Terbourgs. They then went for a walk and, in Kensington Gore, near one of the entrances to Hyde Park or Kensington Gardens, there was an old Irish apple-woman sitting with her feet in a basket, smoking a pipe, and selling oranges.

'Arranges two a penny, sorr,' said the old woman in a general way.

And Berg, turning to her and throwing out his hands appealingly, said:

'O, madame, avez-vous vu les Terbourgs? Allez voir les Terbourgs.'

He felt that such a big note had been left out of the life of any one who had not seen them.

AT DOCTORS' COMMONS

A woman once stopped me at the entrance to Doctors' Commons and said:

'If you please, sir, can you tell me – is this the place that I came to before?'

MEMNON

I saw the driver of the Hampstead bus once, near St. Giles's Church – an old, fat, red-faced man sitting bolt upright on the top of his bus in a driving storm of snow, fast asleep with a huge waterproof over his great-coat which descended with sweeping lines on to a tarpaulin. All this rose out of a cloud of steam from the horses. He had a short clay pipe in his mouth but, for the moment, he looked just like Memnon.

MANZI THE MODEL

They had promised him sittings at the Royal Academy and then refused him on the ground that his legs were too hairy. He complained to Gogin:

'Why,' said he, 'I sat at the Slade School for the figure only last week, and there were five ladies, but not one of them told me my legs were too hairy.'

ST. PANCRAS BELLS

Gogin lives at 164 Euston Road, just opposite St. Pancras Church, and the bells play doleful hymn tunes opposite his window which worries him. My St. Dunstan's bells near Clifford's Inn play doleful hymn tunes which enter in at my window; I not only do not dislike them, but rather like them; they are so silly and the bells are out of tune. I never yet was annoyed by either bells or street music except when a loud piano organ strikes up outside the public-house opposite my bedroom window after I am in bed and when I am just going to sleep. However, Jones was at Gogin's one summer evening and the bells struck up their dingy old burden as usual. The tonic bell on which the tune concluded was the most stuffy and out of tune. Gogin said it was like the smell of a bug.

NEW-LAID EGGS

When I take my Sunday walks in the country, I try to buy a few really new-laid eggs warm from the nest. At this time of the year (January) they are very hard to come by, and I have long since

invented a sick wife who has implored me to get her a few eggs laid not earlier than that self-same morning. Of late, as I am getting older, it has become my daughter who has just had a little baby. This will generally draw a new-laid egg, if there is one about the place at all.

At Harrow Weald it has always been my wife who for years has been a great sufferer and finds a really new-laid egg the one thing she can digest in the way of solid food. So I turned her on as movingly as I could not long since, and was at last sold some eggs that were no better than common shop eggs, if so good. Next time I went I said my poor wife had been made seriously ill by them; it was no good trying to deceive her; she could tell a new-laid egg from a bad one as well as any woman in London, and she had such a high temper that it was very unpleasant for me when she found herself disappointed.

'Ah! sir,' said the landlady, 'but you would not like to lose her.'

'Ma'am,' I replied, 'I must not allow my thoughts to wander in that direction. But it's no use bringing her stale eggs, anyhow.'

'THE EGG THAT HEN BELONGED TO'

I got some new-laid eggs a few Sundays ago. The landlady said they were her own, and talked

about them a good deal. She pointed to one of them and said:

'Now, would you believe it? The egg that hen belonged to laid fifty-three hens running and never stopped.'

She called the egg a hen and the hen an egg. One would have thought she had been reading *Life and Habit.*

AT ENGLEFIELD GREEN

As an example of how anything can be made out of anything or done with anything by those who want to do it (as I said in *Life and Habit* that a bullock can take an eyelash out of its eye with its hind-foot – which I saw one of my bullocks in New Zealand do), at the Barley Mow, Englefield Green, they have a picture of a horse and dog talking to one another, made entirely of butterflies' wings, and very well and spiritedly done too.

They have another picture, done in the same way, of a greyhound running after a hare, also good but not so good.

PIGS

We often walk from Rickmansworth across Moor Park to Pinner. On getting out of Moor Park there is a public-house just to the left where

we generally have some shandy-gaff and buy some eggs. The landlord had a noble sow which I photographed for him; some months afterwards I asked how the sow was. She had been sold. The landlord knew she ought to be killed and made into bacon, but he had been intimate with her for three years and some one else must eat her, not he.

'And what,' said I, 'became of her daughter?'

'Oh, we killed her and ate her. You see we had only known her eighteen months.'

I wonder how he settled the exact line beyond which intimacy with a pig must not go if the pig is to be eaten.

THE CHANNEL PASSAGE

How holy people look when they are sea-sick! There was a patient Parsee near me who seemed purified once and for ever from all taint of the flesh. Buddha was a low, worldly-minded, music-hall comic singer in comparison. He sat like this for a long time until . . . and he made a noise like cows coming home to be milked on an April evening.

AT MONTREUIL-SUR-MER

Jones and I lunched at the Hôtel de France where we found everything very good. As we

were going out, the landlady, getting on towards eighty, with a hookish nose, pale blue eyes, and a Giovanni Bellini's Loredano Loredani kind of expression, came up to us and said, in sweetly apologetic accents:

'Avez-vous déjeuné à peu près selon vos idées, Messieurs?'

It would have been too much for her to suppose that she had been able to give us a repast that had fully realised our ideals, still she hoped that these had been, at any rate, adumbrated in the luncheon she had provided. Dear old thing: of course they had and a great deal more than adumbrated.

MRS. DOWE ON 'ALPS AND SANCTUARIES'

After reading *Alps and Sanctuaries* Mrs. Dowe said to Ballard: 'You seem to hear him talking to you all the time you are reading.'

I don't think I ever heard a criticism of my books which pleased me better, especially as Mrs. Dowe is one of the women I have always liked.

NOT TO BE OMITTED

I must get in about the people one meets. The man who did not like parrots because they were too intelligent. And the man who told me that Handel's *Messiah* was 'très chic,' and the smell of the cyclamens 'stupendous.' And the

man who said it was hard to think the world was not more than 6000 years old, and we encouraged him by telling him we thought it must be even more than 7000. And the English lady who said of some one that 'being an artist, you know, of course he had a great deal of poetical feeling.' And the man who was sketching and said he had a very good eye for colour in the light, but would I be good enough to tell him what colour was best for the shadows.

'An amateur,' he said, 'might do very decent things in water-colour, but oils require genius.'

So I said: 'What is genius?'

'Millet's picture of "The Angelus" sold for 700,000 francs. Now that,' he said, 'is genius.'

After which I was very civil to him.

At Bellinzona a man told me that one of the two towers was built by the Visconti and the other by Julius Cæsar, a hundred years earlier. So, poor old Mrs. Barratt at Langar could conceive no longer time than a hundred years. The Trojan war did not last ten years, but ten years was as big a lie as Homer knew.

We went over the Albula Pass to St. Moritz in two diligences and could not settle which was tonic and which was dominant; but the carriage behind us was the relative minor.

There was a picture in the dining-room but we could not get near enough to see it; we thought

it must be either Christ disputing with the Doctors or Louis XVI saying farewell to his family – or something of that sort.

THE SACRO MONTE AT VARESE

The Sacro Monte is a kind of ecclesiastical Rosherville Gardens, eminently the place to spend a happy day.

The processions were best at the last part of the ascent; there were pilgrims, all decked out with coloured feathers, and priests and banners and music and crimson and gold and white and glittering brass against the cloudless blue sky. The old priest sat at his open window to receive the offerings of the devout as they passed, but he did not seem to get more than a few *bambini* modelled in wax. Perhaps he was used to it. And the band played the barocco music on the barocco little piazza and we were all barocco together. It was as though the clergyman at Ladywell had given out that, instead of having service as usual, the congregation would go in procession to the Crystal Palace with all their traps, and that the band had been practising 'Wait till the clouds roll by' for some time, and on Sunday, as a great treat, they should have it.

The Pope has issued an order saying he will not have masses written like operas. It is no use. The Pope can do much, but he will not be able

to get contrapuntal music into Varese. He will not be able to get anything more solemn than *La Fille de Madame Angot* into Varese. As for fugues – ! I would as soon take an English bishop to the Surrey pantomime as to the Sacro Monte on a festa.

Then the pilgrims went into the shadow of a great rock behind the sanctuary, spread themselves out over the grass, and dined.

THE ALBERGO GROTTA CRIMEA

The entrance to this hotel at Chiavenna is through a covered court-yard; steps lead up to the roof of the court-yard, which is a terrace where one dines in fine weather. A great tree grows in the court-yard below, its trunk pierces the floor of the terrace, and its branches shade the open-air dining-room. The walls of the house are painted in fresco, with a check pattern like the late Lord Brougham's trousers, and there are also pictures. One represents Mendelssohn. He is not called Mendelssohn, but I knew him by his legs. He is in the costume of a dandy of some five-and-forty years ago, is smoking a cigar, and appears to be making an offer of marriage to his cook. Down below is a fresco of a man sitting on a barrel with a glass in his hand. A more absolutely worldly-minded, uncultured individual it would be impossible to conceive. When I saw these frescoes I

knew I should get along all right and not be over-charged.

PUBLIC OPINION

The public buys its opinions as it buys its meat, or takes in its milk, on the principle that it is cheaper to do this than to keep a cow. So it is, but the milk is more likely to be watered.

THE WIFE OF BATH

There are Canterbury Pilgrims every Sunday in summer who start from close to the old Tabard, only they go by the South-Eastern Railway and come back the same day for five shillings. And, what is more, they are just the same sort of people. If they do not go to Canterbury they go by the *Clacton Belle* to Clacton-on-Sea. There is not a Sunday the whole summer through but you may find all Chaucer's pilgrims, man and woman for man and woman, on board the *Lord of the Isles* or the *Clacton Belle*. Why, I have seen the Wife of Bath on the *Lord of the Isles* myself. She was eating her luncheon off an *Ally Sloper's Half-Holiday*, which was spread out upon her knees. Whether it was I who had had too much beer or she I cannot tell, God knoweth; and whether or no I was caught up into Paradise, again I cannot tell; but I certainly did hear unspeakable words which it is not lawful for a man to utter, and that

not above fourteen years ago but the very last Sunday that ever was. The Wife of Bath heard them too, but she never turned a hair. Luckily I had my detective camera with me, so I snapped her there and then. She put her hand up to her mouth at that very moment and rather spoiled herself, but not much.

SUNDAY MORNING AT SOGLIO

The quarantine men sat on the wall, dangling their legs over the parapet and singing the same old tune over and over again and the same old words over and over again. 'Fu tradito, fu tradito da una donna.' To them it was a holiday.

Two gnomes came along and looked at me. I asked the first how old it was; it said fourteen. They both looked about eight. I said that the flies and the fowls ought to be put into quarantine, and the gnomes grinned and showed their teeth till the corners of their mouths met at the backs of their heads.

The skeleton of a bird was nailed up against a barn, and I said to a man: 'Aquila?'

He replied: 'Aquila,' and I passed on.

The village boys came round me and sighed while they watched me sketching. And the women came and exclaimed: 'Oh che testa, che testa!'

And the bells in the windows of the campanile

began, and I turned and looked up at their beautiful lolling and watched their fitful tumble-aboutiness. They swung open-mouthed like elephants with uplifted trunks, and I wished I could have fed them with buns. They were not like English bells, and yet they rang more *all' Inglese* than bells mostly do in Italy – they had got it, but they had not got it right.

There used to be two crows, and when one disappeared the other came to the house where it had not been for a month. While I was sketching it played with a woman who was weeding; it got on her back and tried to bite her hat; then it got down and pecked at the nails in her boots and tried to steal them. It let her catch it, and then made a little fuss, but it did not fly away when she let it go, it continued playing with her. Then it came to exploit me but would not come close up. Signor Scartazzini says it will play with all the women of the place but not with men or boys, except with him.

Then there came a monk and passed by me, and I knew I had seen him before but could not think where till, of a sudden, it flashed across me that he was Valoroso XXIV, King of Paphlagonia, no doubt expiating his offences.

And I watched the ants that were busy near my feet, and listened to them as they talked about me and discussed whether man has instinct.

'What is he doing here?' they said; 'he wasn't here yesterday. Certainly they have no instinct. They may have a low kind of reason, but nothing approaching to instinct. Some of the London houses show signs of instinct – Gower Street, for example, does really seem to suggest instinct; but it is all delusive. It is curious that these cities of theirs should always exist in places where there are no ants. They certainly anthropomorphise too freely. Or is it perhaps that we formicomorphise more than we should?'

And Silvio came by on his way to church. It was he who taught all the boys in Soglio to make a noise. Before he came up there was no sound to be heard in the streets, except the fountains and the bells. I asked him whether the curate was good to him.

'Si,' he replied, 'è abbastanza buono.'

I should think Auld Robin Gray was 'abbastanza buono' to Mrs. Gray.

One of the little girls told me that Silvio had so many *centesimi* and she had none. I said at once:

'You don't want any *centesimi*.'

As soon as these words fell from my lips, I knew I must be getting old.

And presently the Devil came up to me. He was a nice, clean old man, but he dropped his h's, and that was where he spoiled himself – or perhaps it was just this that threw me off my

guard, for I had always heard that the Prince of Darkness was a perfect gentleman. He whispered to me that in the winter the monks of St. Bernard sometimes say matins overnight.

The blue of the mountains looks bluer through the chestnuts than through the pines. The river is snowy against the 'Verdi prati e selve amene.' The great fat tobacco plant agrees with itself if not with us; I never saw any plant look in better health. The briar knows perfectly well what it wants to do and that it does not want to be disturbed; it knows, in fact, all that it cares to know. The question is how and why it got to care to know just these things and no others.

Two cheeky goats came tumbling down upon me and demanded salt, and the man came from the saw-mill and, with his great brown hands, scooped the mud from the dams of the rills that watered his meadow, for the hour had come when it was his turn to use the stream.

There were cow-bells, mountain elder-berries, and lots of flowers in the grass. There was the glacier, the roar of the river, and a plaintive little chapel on a green knoll under the great cliff of ice which cut the sky. There was a fat, crumby woman making hay. She said:

'Buon giorno.'

And the 'i o r' of the 'giorno' came out like oil and honey. I saw she wanted a gossip. She and

her husband tuned their scythes in two-part, note-against-note counterpoint; but I could hear that it was she who was the canto fermo and he who was the counterpoint. I peered down over the edge of the steep slippery slope which all had to be mown from top to bottom; if hay grew on the dome of St. Paul's these dreadful traders would gather it in, and presently the autumn crocuses would begin to push up their delicate, naked snouts through the closely shaven surface. I expressed my wonder.

'Siamo esatti,' said the fat, crumby woman.

For what little things will not people risk their lives? So Smith and I crossed the Rangitata. So Esau sold his birthright.

It was noon, and I was so sheer above the floor of the valley and the sun was so sheer above me that the chestnuts in the meadow of Bondo squatted upon their own shadows and the gardens were as though the valley had been paved with bricks of various colours. The old grass-grown road ran below, nearer the river, where many a good man had gone up and down on his journey to that larger road where the reader and the writer shall alike join him.

SILVIO : A DUOLOGUE

'And you shall read Longfellow much in England?' said Silvio.

'No,' I replied, 'I don't think we read him very much.'

'But how is that? He is a very pretty poet.'

'Oh yes, but I don't greatly like poetry myself.'

'Why don't you like poetry?'

'You see, poetry resembles metaphysics, one does not mind one's own, but one does not like any one else's.'

'Oh! And what you call metaphysic?'

This was too much. It was like the lady who attributed the decline of the Italian opera to the fact that singers would no longer 'podge' their voices.

'And what, pray, is "podging"?' enquired my informant of the lady.

'Why, don't you understand what "podging" is? Well, I don't know that I can exactly tell you, but I am sure Edith and Blanche podge beautifully.'

However, I said that metaphysics were *la filosofia* and this quieted him. He left poetry and turned to prose.

'Then you shall like much the works of Washington Irving?'

I was grieved to say that I did not; but I dislike Washington Irving so cordially that I determined to chance another 'No.'

'Then you shall like better Fenimore Cooper?'

I was becoming reckless. I could not go on saying 'No' after 'No,' and yet to ask me to be ever so little enthusiastic about Fenimore Cooper was laying a burden upon me heavier than I could bear, so I said I did not like him.

'Oh, I see,' said the boy; 'then it is *Uncle Tom's Cabin* that you shall like?'

Here I gave in. More 'Noes' I could not say, so, thinking I might as well be hung for a sheep as for a mutton chop, I said that I thought *Uncle Tom's Cabin* one of the most wonderful and beautiful books that ever were written. Having got at a writer whom I admired, he was satisfied, but not for long.

'And you think very much of the theories of Darwin in England, do you not?'

I groaned inwardly and said we did.

'And what are the theories of Darwin?'

Imagine what followed!

After which:

'Why do you not like poetry? – You shall have a very good university in London?' and so on.

FASCINATION

I know a man, and one whom people generally call a very clever one, who, when his eye catches mine, if I meet him at an at home or an evening party, beams upon me from afar with the expres-

sion of an intellectual rattlesnake on having espied an intellectual rabbit. Through any crowd that man will come sidling towards me, ruthless and irresistible as fate; while I, foreknowing my doom, sidle also him-wards, and flatter myself that no sign of my inward apprehension has escaped me.

SUPREME OCCASIONS

Men are seldom more commonplace than on supreme occasions. I knew of an old gentleman who insisted on having the original polka played to him as he lay upon his death-bed.

It is a mistake to expect people to rise to the occasion unless the occasion is only a little above their ordinary limit. People seldom rise to their greater occasions, they almost always fall to them. It is only supreme men who are supreme at supreme moments. They differ from the rest of us in this that, when the moment for rising comes, they rise at once and instinctively.

AT PIORA

One day in the autumn of 1886 I walked up to Piora from Airolo, returning the same day. At Piora I met a very nice quiet man whose name I presently discovered, and who, I have since learned, is a well-known and most liberal employer

of labour somewhere in the north of England. He told me that he had been induced to visit Piora by a book which had made a great impression upon him. He could not recollect its title, but it had made a great impression upon him; nor yet could he recollect the author's name, but the book had made a great impression upon him; he could not remember even what else there was in the book; the only thing he knew was that it had made a great impression upon him.

This is a good example of what is called a residuary impression. Whether or no I told him that the book which had made such a great impression upon him was called *Alps and Sanctuaries*, and that it had been written by the person he was addressing, I cannot tell. It would be very like me to have blurted it all out and given him to understand how fortunate he had been in meeting me; this would be so fatally like me that the chances are ten to one that I did it; but I have, thank Heaven, no recollection of sin in this respect, and have rather a strong impression that, for once in my life, I smiled to myself and said nothing.

AT FERENTINO

After dinner I ordered a coffee; the landlord, who also had had his dinner, asked me to be good enough to defer it for another year and I assented.

I then asked him which was the best inn at Segni. He replied that it did not matter, that when a man had *quattrini* one *albergo* was as good as another. I said, No; that more depended on what kind of blood was running about inside the *albergatore* than on how many *quattrini* the guest had in his pocket. He smiled and offered me a pinch of the most delicious snuff. His wife came and cleared the table, having done which she shed the water bottle over the floor to keep the dust down. I am sure she did it all to all the blessed gods that live in heaven, though she did not say so.

THE IMPERFECT LADY

There was one at a country house in Sicily where I was staying. She had been lent to my host for change of air by his friend the marchese. She dined at table with us and we all liked her very much. She was extremely pretty and not less amiable than pretty. In order to reach the dining-room we had to go through her bedroom as also through my host's. When the monsignore came, she dined with us just the same, and the old priest evidently did not mind at all. In Sicily they do not bring the scent of the incense across the dining-room table. And one would hardly expect the attempt to be made by people who use the oath 'Santo Diavolo.'

THE GRAPE-FILTER

When the water of a place is bad, it is safest to drink none that has not been filtered through either the berry of a grape, or else a tub of malt. These are the most reliable filters yet invented.

'THE LOST CHORD'

It should be 'The Lost Progression,' for the young lady was mistaken in supposing she had ever heard any single chord 'like the sound of a great Amen.' Unless we are to suppose that she had already found the chord of C Major for the final syllable of the word and was seeking the chord for the first syllable; and there she is on the walls of a Milanese restaurant arpeggioing experimental harmonies in a transport of delight to advertise Somebody and Someone's pianos and holding the loud pedal solidly down all the time. Her family had always been unsympathetic about her music. They said it was like a loose bundle of firewood which you never can get across the room without dropping sticks; they said she would have been so much better employed doing anything else.

Fancy being in the room with her while she was strumming about and hunting after her chord! Fancy being in heaven with her when she had found it!

INTRODUCTION OF FOREIGN PLANTS

I have brought back this year some mountain auriculas and the seed of some salvia and Fusio tiger-lily, and mean to plant the auriculas and to sow the seeds in Epping Forest and elsewhere round about London. I wish people would more generally bring back the seeds of pleasing foreign plants and introduce them broadcast, sowing them by our waysides and in our fields, or in whatever situation is most likely to suit them. It is true, this would puzzle botanists, but there is no reason why botanists should not be puzzled. A botanist is a person whose aim is to uproot, kill, and exterminate every plant that is at all remarkable for rarity or any special virtue, and the rarer it is the more bitterly he will hunt it down.

AMBER

In one piece of amber there was a whole willow-leaf, and in another a little snail-shell. . . . The odds against the preservation of that willow-leaf were heaven knows how many million to one, still it was preserved. On the other hand, the odds against no willow-leaf having been preserved, if there was any amber exuding in the neighbourhood, were also heaven knows how many million to one. So that squares it, and prevents our being compelled to accept the Christian miracles.

SAINT COSIMO AND SAINT DAMIANO AT SIENA

Sano di Pietro shows us a heartless practical joke played by these two very naughty saints, both medical men, who should be uncanonised immediately. It seems they laid their heads together and for some reason, best known to themselves, resolved to cut a leg off a dead negro and put it on to a white man. In the one compartment they are seen in high glee cutting the negro's leg off. In the next they have gone to the white man who is in bed, obviously asleep, and are substituting the black leg for his own. Then, no doubt, they will stand behind the door and see what he does when he wakes. They must be saints because they have glories on, but it looks as though a glory is not much more to be relied on than a gig as a test of respectability.

GRACE

Grace is best, for where grace is, love is not distant. Grace! the old Pagan ideal whose charm even unlovely Paul could not withstand, but, as the legend tells us, his soul fainted within him, his heart misgave him, and, standing alone on the seashore at dusk, he 'troubled deaf heaven with his bootless cries,' his thin voice pleading for grace after the flesh.

The waves came in one after another, the sea-

gulls cried together after their kind, the wind rustled among the dried canes upon the sand-banks, and there came a voice from heaven saying, 'Let My grace be sufficient for thee.' Whereon, failing of the thing itself, he stole the word and strove to crush its meaning to the measure of his own limitations. But the true grace, with her groves and high places, and troops of young men and maidens crowned with flowers, and singing of love and youth and wine—the true grace he drove out into the wilderness—high up, it may be, into Piora, and into such-like places. Happy they who her ill report.

IX

TRUTH AND CONVENIENCE

★

OPPOSITES

You may have all growth or nothing growth, just as you may have all mechanism or nothing mechanism, all chance or nothing chance, but you must not mix them. Having settled this, you must proceed at once to mix them.

TWO POINTS OF VIEW

Everything must be studied from the point of view of itself, as near as we can get to this, and from the point of view of its relations, as near as we can get to them. If we try to see it absolutely in itself, unalloyed with relations, we shall find, by and by, that we have, as it were, whittled it away. If we try to see it in its relations to the bitter end, we shall find that there is no corner of the universe into which it does not enter. Either way the thing eludes us if we try to grasp it with the horny hands of language and conscious thought. Either way we can think it perfectly well—so long as we don't think about thinking about it. The pale cast of thought sicklies over everything.

Practically everything should be seen as itself pure and simple, so far as we can comfortably see

it, and at the same time as not itself, so far as we can comfortably see it, and then the two views should be combined, so far as we can comfortably combine them. If we cannot comfortably combine them, we should think of something else.

TRUTH

i

We can neither define what we mean by truth nor be in doubt as to our meaning. And this I suppose must be due to the antiquity of the instinct that, on the whole, directs us towards truth. We cannot self-vivisect ourselves in respect of such a vital function, though we can discharge it normally and easily enough so long as we do not think about it.

ii

The pursuit of truth is chimerical. That is why it is so hard to say what truth is. There is no permanent absolute unchangeable truth; what we should pursue is the most convenient arrangement of our ideas.

iii

There is no such source of error as the pursuit of absolute truth.

iv

A. B. was so impressed with the greatness and certain ultimate victory of truth that he considered it unnecessary to encourage her or do anything to defend her.

v

He who can best read men best knows all truth that need concern him; for it is not what the thing is, apart from man's thoughts in respect of it, but how to reach the fairest compromise between men's past and future opinions that is the fittest object of consideration; and this we get by reading men and women.

vi

Truth should not be absolutely lost sight of, but it should not be talked about.

vii

Some men love truth so much that they seem to be in continual fear lest she should catch cold on over-exposure.

viii

The firmest line that can be drawn upon the smoothest paper has still jagged edges if seen through a microscope. This does not matter

until important deductions are made on the supposition that there are no jagged edges.

ix

Truth should never be allowed to become extreme; otherwise it will be apt to meet and to run into the extreme of falsehood. It should be played pretty low down – to the pit and gallery rather than the stalls. Pit-truth is more true to the stalls than stall-truth to the pit.

x

An absolute lie may live – for it is a true lie, and is saved by being flecked with a grain of its opposite. Not so absolute truth.

xi

Whenever we push truth hard she runs to earth in contradiction in terms, that is to say, in falsehood. An essential contradiction in terms meets us at the end of every enquiry.

xii

Perhaps a little bit of absolute truth on any one question might prove a general solvent, and dissipate the universe.

xiii

Truth generally is kindness, but where the two diverge or collide, kindness should override truth.

TRUTH AND CONVENIENCE

FALSEHOOD

i

Truth consists not in never lying but in knowing when to lie and when not to do so. *De minimis non curat veritas.*

Yes, but what is a minimum? Sometimes a maximum is a minimum and sometimes it is the other way.

ii

Lying is like borrowing or appropriating in music. It is only a good, sound, truthful person who can lie to any good purpose; if a man is not habitually truthful his very lies will be false to him and betray him. The converse also is true; if a man is not a good, sound, honest, capable liar there is no truth in him.

iii

Any fool can tell the truth, but it requires a man of some sense to know how to lie well.

iv

I do not mind lying, but I hate inaccuracy.

v

A friend who cannot at a pinch remember a thing or two that never happened is as bad as one who does not know how to forget.

vi

Cursed is he that does not know when to shut his mind. An open mind is all very well in its way, but it ought not to be so open that there is no keeping anything in or out of it. It should be capable of shutting its doors sometimes, or it may be found a little draughty.

vii

He who knows not how to wink knows not how to see; and he who knows not how to lie knows not how to speak the truth. So he who cannot suppress his opinions cannot express them.

viii

No man's opinions can be worth holding unless he knows how to deny them easily and gracefully, upon occasion, in the cause of charity.

ix

There can no more be a true statement without falsehood distributed through it, than a note on a well-tuned piano that is not intentionally and deliberately put out of tune to some extent in order to have the piano in the most perfect possible tune. Any perfection of tune as regards

one key can only be got at the expense of all the rest.

x

Lying has a kind of respect and reverence with it. We pay a person the compliment of acknowledging his superiority whenever we lie to him.

xi

I seem to see lies crowding and crushing at a narrow gate and working their way in along with truths into the domain of history.

NATURE'S DOUBLE FALSEHOOD

That one great lie she told about the earth being flat when she knew it was round all the time! And again how she stuck to it that the sun went round us when it was we who were going round the sun! This double falsehood has irretrievably ruined my confidence in her. There is no lie which she will not tell and stick to like a Gladstonian. How plausibly she told her tale, and how many ages was it before she was so much as suspected! And then when things did begin to look bad for her, how she brazened it out, and what a desperate business it was to bring her shifts and prevarications to book!

CONVENIENCE

i

We wonder at its being as hard often to discover convenience as it is to discover truth. But surely convenience is truth.

ii

The use of truth is like the use of words; both truth and words depend greatly upon custom.

iii

We do with truth much as we do with God. We create it according to our own requirements and then say that it has created us, or requires that we shall do or think so and so – whatever we find convenient.

iv

'What is Truth?' is often asked, as though it were harder to say what truth is than what anything else is. But what is Justice? What is anything? An eternal contradiction in terms meets us at the end of every enquiry. We are not required to know what truth is, but to speak the truth, and so with justice.

v

The search after truth is like the search after perpetual motion or the attempt to square the

circle. All we should aim at is the most convenient way of looking at a thing – the way that most sensible people are likely to find give them least trouble for some time to come. It is not true that the sun used to go round the earth until Copernicus's time, but it is true that until Copernicus's time it was most convenient to us to hold this. Still, we had certain ideas which could only fit in comfortably with our other ideas when we came to consider the sun as the centre of the planetary system.

Obvious convenience often takes a long time before it is fully recognised and acted upon, but there will be a *nisus* towards it as long and as widely spread as the desire of men to be saved trouble. If truth is not trouble-saving in the long run it is not truth: truth is only that which is most largely and permanently trouble-saving. The ultimate triumph, therefore, of truth rests on a very tangible basis – much more so than when it is made to depend upon the will of an unseen and unknowable agency. If my views about the Odyssey, for example, will, in the long run, save students from perplexity, the students will be sure to adopt them, and I have no wish that they should adopt them otherwise.

It does not matter much what the truth is, but our knowing the truth – that is to say our hitting on the most permanently convenient arrangement

of our ideas upon a subject whatever it may be – matters very much; at least it matters, or may matter, very much in some relations. And however little it matters, yet it matters, and however much it matters yet it does not matter. In the utmost importance there is unimportance, and in the utmost unimportance there is importance. So also it is with certainty, life, matter, necessity, consciousness, and, indeed, with everything which can form an object of human sensation at all, or of those after-reasonings which spring ultimately from sensations. This is a roundabout way of saying that every question has two sides.

vi

Our concern is with the views we shall choose to take and to let other people take concerning things, and as to the way of expressing those views which shall give least trouble. If we express ourselves in one way we find our ideas in confusion and our action impotent: if in another our ideas cohere harmoniously, and our action is edifying. The convenience of least disturbing vested ideas, and at the same time rearranging our views in accordance with new facts that come to our knowledge, this is our proper care. But it is idle to say we do not know anything about things – perhaps we do, perhaps we don't – but we at any rate know what sane people think and

are likely to think about things, and this to all intents and purposes is knowing the things themselves. For the things only are what sensible people agree to say and think they are.

vii

The arrangement of our ideas is as much a matter of convenience as the packing of goods in a druggist's or draper's store and leads to exactly the same kind of difficulties in the matter of classifying them. We all admit the arbitrariness of classifications in a languid way, but we do not think of it more than we can help – I suppose because it is so inconvenient to do so. The great advantage of classification is to conceal the fact that subdivisions are as arbitrary as they are.

CLASSIFICATION

There can be no perfect way, for classification presupposes that a thing has absolute limits whereas there is nothing that does not partake of the universal infinity – nothing whose boundaries do not vary. Everything is one thing at one time and in some respects, and another at other times and in other respects. We want a new mode of measurement altogether; at present we take what gaps we can find, set up milestones, and declare them irremovable. We want a measure which

shall express, or at any rate recognise, the harmonics of resemblance that lurk even in the most absolute differences and *vice versa*.

ATTEMPTS AT CLASSIFICATION

are like nailing battens of our own flesh and blood upon ourselves as an inclined plane that we may walk up ourselves more easily; and yet it answers very sufficiently.

X

REBELLIOUSNESS

★

GOD AND LIFE

We regard these as two distinct things and say that the first made the second, much as, till lately, we regarded memory and heredity as two distinct things having less connection than even that supposed to exist between God and life. Now, however, that we know heredity to be only a necessary outcome, development, and manifestation of memory – so that, given such a faculty as memory, the faculty of heredity follows as being inherent therein and bound to issue from it – in like manner presently, instead of seeing life as a thing created by God, we shall see God and life as one thing, there being no life without God nor God without life; where there is life there is God and where there is God there is life.

They say that God is love, but life and love are co-extensive; for hate is but a mode of love, as life and death lurk always in one another; and 'God is life' is not far off saying 'God is love.' Again, they say, 'Where there is life there is hope,' but hope is of the essence of God, for it is faith and hope that have underlain all evolution.

GOD AND FLESH

The course of true God never did run smooth. God to be of any use must be made manifest, and he can only be made manifest in and through flesh. And flesh to be of any use (except for eating) must be alive, and it can only be alive by being inspired of God. The trouble lies in the getting the flesh and the God together in the right proportions. There is lots of God and lots of flesh, but the flesh has always got too much God or too little, and the God has always too little flesh or too much.

GODS AND PROPHETS

It is the manner of gods and prophets to begin: 'Thou shalt have none other God or Prophet but me.' If I were to start as a god or a prophet, I think I should take the line: 'Thou shalt not believe in me. Thou shalt not have me for a god. Thou shalt worship any damned thing thou likest except me.' This should be my first and great commandment, and my second should be like unto it.

BELIEVING

Above all things, let no unwary reader do me the injustice of believing in *me*. In that I write at all I am among the damned. If he must

believe in anything, let him believe in the music of Handel, the painting of Giovanni Bellini, and in the thirteenth chapter of St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians.

FAITH AND REASON

The instinct towards brushing faith aside and being strictly reasonable is strong and natural; so also is the instinct towards brushing logic and consistency on one side if they become troublesome; in other words – so is the instinct towards basing action on a faith which is beyond reason. It is because both instincts are so natural that so many accept and so many reject Catholicism. The two go along for some time as very good friends and then fight; sometimes one beats and sometimes the other, but they always make it up again and jog along as before, for they have a great respect for one another.

GOD AND THE DEVIL

God's merits are so transcendent that it is not surprising his faults should be in reasonable proportion. The faults are, indeed, on such a scale that, when looked at without relation to the merits with which they are interwoven, they become so appalling that people shrink from ascribing them to the Deity and have invented

the Devil, without seeing that there would be more excuse for God's killing the Devil, and so getting rid of evil, than there can be for his failing to be everything that he would like to be.

For God is not so white as he is painted, and he gets on better with the Devil than people think. The Devil is too useful for him to wish him ill and, in like manner, half the Devil's trade would be at an end should any great mishap bring God well down in the world. For all the mouths they make at one another they play into each other's hands and have got on so well as partners, playing Spenlow and Jorkins to one another, for so many years that there seems no reason why they should cease to do so. The conception of them as the one absolutely void of evil and the other of good is a vulgar notion taken from science whose priests have ever sought to get every idea and every substance pure of all alloy.

God and the Devil are about as four to three. There is enough preponderance of God to make it far safer to be on his side than on the Devil's, but the excess is not so great as his professional *claqueurs* pretend it is. It is like gambling at Monte Carlo; if you play long enough you are sure to lose, but now and again you may win a great deal of excellent money if you will only cease playing the moment you have won it.

CHRISTIANITY

i

As an instrument of warfare against vice, or as a tool for making virtue, Christianity is a mere flint implement.

ii

Christianity is a woman's religion, invented by women and womanish men for themselves. The Church's one foundation is not Christ, as is commonly said, it is woman; and calling the Madonna the Queen of Heaven is only a poetical way of acknowledging that women are the main support of the priests.

iii

It is not the church in a village that is the source of the mischief, but the rectory. I would not touch a church from one end of England to the other.

iv

Christianity is only seriously pretended by some among the idle, bourgeois middle-classes. The working classes and the most cultured intelligence of the time reach by short cuts what the highways of our schools and universities mislead us from by many a winding bout, if they do not prevent our ever reaching it.

v

It is not easy to say which is the more obvious, the antecedent improbability of the Christian scheme and miracles, or the breakdown of the evidence on which these are supposed to rest. And yet Christianity has overrun the world.

vi

If there is any moral in Christianity, if there is anything to be learned from it, if the whole story is not profitless from first to last, it comes to this that a man should back his own opinion against the world's – and this is a very risky and immoral thing to do, but the Lord hath mercy on whom he will have mercy.

vii

Christianity is true in so far as it has fostered beauty and false in so far as it has fostered ugliness. It is therefore not a little true and not a little false.

viii

Christ said he came not to destroy but to fulfil – but he destroyed more than he fulfilled. Every system that is to live must both destroy and fulfil.

MIRACLES

They do more to unsettle faith in the existing order than to settle it in any other; similarly,

missionaries are more valuable as underminers of old faiths than as propagators of new. Miracles are not impossible; nothing is impossible till we have got an incontrovertible first premise. The question is not 'Are the Christian miracles possible?' but 'Are they convenient? Do they fit comfortably with our other ideas?'

WANTS AND CREEDS

As in the organic world there is no organ, so in the world of thought there is no thought, which may not be called into existence by long persistent effort. If a man wants either to believe or disbelieve the Christian miracles he can do so if he tries hard enough; but if he does not care whether he believes or disbelieves and simply wants to find out which side has the best of it, this he will find a more difficult matter. Nevertheless he will probably be able to do this too if he tries.

FAITH

i

The reason why the early Chrstians held faith in such account was because they felt it to be a feat of such superhuman difficulty.

ii

You can do very little with faith, but you can do nothing without it.

iii

We are all agreed that too much faith is as bad as too little, and too little as bad as too much; but we differ as to what is too much and what too little.

iv

It is because both Catholics and myself make faith, not reason, the basis of our system that I am able to be easy in mind about not becoming a Catholic. Not that I ever wanted to become a Catholic, but I mean I believe I can beat them with their own weapons.

v

A man may have faith as a mountain, but he will not be able to say to a grain of mustard seed: 'Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea' – not at least with any effect upon the mustard seed –unless he goes the right way to work by putting the mustard seed into his pocket and taking the train to Brighton.

vi

The just live by faith, but they not infrequently also die by it.

THE CUCKOO AND THE MOON

The difference between the Christian and the Mahomedan is only as the difference between one

who will turn his money when he first hears the cuckoo, but thinks it folly to do so on seeing the new moon, and one who will turn it religiously at the new moon, but will scout the notion that he need do so on hearing the cuckoo.

BUDDHISM

This seems to be a jumble of Christianity and *Life and Habit.*

THEIST AND ATHEIST

The fight between them is as to whether God shall be called God or shall have some other name.

THE PECULIAR PEOPLE

The only people in England who really believe in God are the Peculiar People. Perhaps that is why they are called peculiar. See how belief in an anthropomorphic God divides allegiance and disturbs civil order as soon as it becomes vital.

JESUS CHRIST'S GHOST

There will be no comfortable and safe development of our social arrangements – I mean we shall not get infanticide, and the permission of suicide, nor cheap and easy divorce – till Jesus

Christ's ghost has been laid; and the best way to lay it is to be a moderate churchman.

THE SPIRITUAL TREADMILL

The Church of England has something in her liturgy of the spiritual treadmill. It is a very nice treadmill no doubt, but Sunday after Sunday we keep step with the same old 'We have left undone that which we ought to have done; And we have done those things which we ought not to have done' without making any progress. With the Church of Rome, I understand that those whose piety is sufficiently approved are told they may consider themselves as a finished article and that, except on some few rare festivals, they need no longer keep on going to church and confessing. The picture is completed and may be framed, glazed, and hung up.

THE DIM RELIGIOUS LIGHT

A light cannot be religious if it is not dim. Religion belongs to the twilight of our thoughts, just as business of all kinds to their full daylight. So a picture which may be impressive while seen in a dark light will not hold its own in a bright one.

The Greeks and Romans did not enquire into the evidences on which their belief that Minerva

sprang full-armed from the brain of Jupiter was based. If they had written books of evidences to show how certainly it all happened, etc. – well, I suppose if they had had an endowed Church with some considerable prizes, they would have found means to hoodwink the public.

THE PEACE THAT PASSETH UNDERSTANDING

Yes. But as there is a peace more comfortable than any understanding, so also there is an understanding more covetable than any peace.

THE NEW TESTAMENT

If it is a testamentary disposition at all, it is so drawn that it has given rise to incessant litigation during the last nearly two thousand years and seems likely to continue doing so for a good many years longer. It ought never to have been admitted to probate. Either the testator drew it himself, in which case we have another example of the folly of trying to make one's own will, or if he left it to the authors of the several books – this is like employing many lawyers to do the work of one.

CHRIST AND THE L. & N.W. RAILWAY

Admitting for the moment that Christ can be said to have died for me in any sense, it is only

pretended that he did so in the same sort of way as the London and North Western Railway was made for me. Granted that I am very glad the railway was made and use it when I find it convenient, I do not suppose that those who projected and made the line allowed me to enter into their thoughts; the debt of gratitude is divided among so many that the amount due from each one is practically nil.

'GOD MOVES IN A MYSTERIOUS WAY HIS WONDERS TO PERFORM'

God is only a less jumping kind of jumping cat; and those who worship God are still worshippers of the jumping cat all the time. There is no getting away from the jumping cat – if I climb up into heaven, it is there; if I go down to hell, it is there also; if I take the wings of the morning and remain in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there, and so on; it is about my path and about my bed and spieth out all my ways. It is the eternal underlying verity or the eternal underlying lie, as people may choose to call it.

PERSONIFIED SCIENCE

Science is being daily more and more personified and anthropomorphised into a god. By and by they will say that science took our nature upon him, and sent down his only begotten son, Charles

Darwin, or Huxley, into the world so that those who believe in him, etc.; and they will burn people for saying that science, after all, is only an expression for our ignorance of our own ignorance.

SCIENCE AND THEOLOGY

We should endow neither; we should treat them as we treat conservatism and liberalism, encouraging both, so that they may keep watch upon one another, and letting them go in and out of power with the popular vote concerning them.

The world is better carried on upon the barrister principle of special pleading upon two sides before an impartial ignorant tribunal, to whom things have got to be explained, than it would be if nobody were to maintain any opinion in which he did not personally believe.

What we want is to reconcile both science and theology with sincerity and good breeding, to make our experts understand that they are nothing if they are not single-minded and urbane. Get them to understand this, and there will be no difficulty about reconciling science and theology.

THE CHURCH AND THE SUPERNATURAL

If we saw the Church wishing to back out of the supernatural and anxious to explain it away

where possible, we would keep our disbelief in the supernatural in the background, as far as we could, and would explain away our rejection of the miracles, as far as was decent; furthermore we would approximate our language to theirs wherever possible, and insist on the points on which we are all agreed, rather than on points of difference; in fact, we would meet them half way and be only too glad to do it. I maintain that in my books I actually do this as much as is possible, but I shall try and do it still more. As a matter of fact, however, the Church clings to the miraculous element of Christianity more fondly than ever; she parades it more and more, and shows no sign of wishing to give up even the smallest part of it. It is this which makes us despair of being able to do anything with her and feel that either she or we must go.

GRATITUDE AND REVENGE

Gratitude is as much an evil to be minimised as revenge is. Justice, our law and our law courts are for the taming and regulating of revenge. Current prices and markets and commercial regulations are for the taming of gratitude and its reduction from a public nuisance to something which shall at least be tolerable. Revenge and gratitude are correlative terms. Our system of

commerce is a protest against the unbridled licence of gratitude. Gratitude, in fact, like revenge, is a mistake unless under certain securities.

CANT AND HYPOCRISY

We should organise a legitimate channel for instincts so profound as these, just as we have found it necessary to do with lust and revenge by the institutions of marriage and the law courts. This is the *raison d'être* of the church. You kill a man just as much whether you murder him or hang him after the formalities of a trial. And so with lust and marriage, *mutatis mutandis*. So again with the professions of religion and medicine. You swindle a man as much when you sell him a drug of whose action you are ignorant, and tell him it will protect him from disease, as when you give him a bit of bread, which you assure him is the body of Jesus Christ, and then send a plate round for a subscription. You swindle him as much by these acts as if you picked his pocket, or obtained money from him under false pretences in any other way; but you swindle him according to the rules and in an authorised manner.

REAL BLASPHEMY

On one of our Sunday walks near London we passed a forlorn and dilapidated Primitive Metho-

dist Chapel. The windows were a good deal broken and there was a notice up offering ten shillings reward to any one who should give such information as should lead to the, etc. Cut in stone over the door was this inscription, and we thought it as good an example of real blasphemy as we had ever seen:

'When God makes up his last account
Of holy children in his mount,
'Twill be an honour to appear
As one new born and nourished here.'

THE ENGLISH CHURCH ABROAD

People say you must not try to abolish Christianity until you have something better to put in its place. They might as well say we must not take away turnpikes and corn laws till we have some other hindrances to put in their place. Besides no one wants to abolish Christianity – all we want is not to be snubbed and bullied if we reject the miraculous part of it for ourselves.

At Biella an English clergyman asked if I was a Roman Catholic. I said, quite civilly, that I was not a Catholic. He replied that he had asked me not if I was a Catholic but if I was a Roman Catholic. What was I? Was I an Anglican Catholic? So, seeing that he meant to argue, I replied:

'I do not know. I am a Londoner and of the same religion as people generally are in London.'

This made him angry. He snorted:

'Oh, that's nothing at all,' and almost immediately left the table.

As much as possible I keep away from English-frequented hotels in Italy and Switzerland because I find that if I do not go to service on Sunday I am made uncomfortable. It is this bullying that I want to do away with. As regards Christianity I should hope and think that I am more Christian than not.

People ought to be allowed to leave their cards at church, instead of going inside. I have half a mind to try this next time I am in a foreign hotel among English people.

DRUNKENNESS

No one can hate drunkenness more than I do, but I am confident the human intellect owes its superiority over that of the lower animals in great measure to the stimulus which alcohol has given to imagination – imagination being little else than another name for illusion.

HELL-FIRE

If Vesuvius does not frighten those who live under it, is it likely that Hell-fire should frighten any reasonable person?

I met a traveller who had returned from Hades where he had conversed with Tantalus and with others of the shades. They all agreed that for the first six, or perhaps twelve, months they disliked their punishment very much; but after that, it was like shelling peas on a hot afternoon in July. They began by discovering (no doubt long after the fact had been apparent enough to every one else) that they had not been noticing what they were doing so much as usual, and that they had even been thinking of something else. From this moment, the automatic stage of action having set in, the progress towards always thinking of something else was rapid and they soon forgot that they were undergoing any punishment.

Tantalus did get a little something not infrequently; water stuck to the hairs of his body and he gathered it up in his hand; he also got many an apple when the wind was napping as it had to do sometimes. Perhaps he could have done with more, but he got enough to keep him going quite comfortably. His sufferings were nothing as compared with those of a needy heir to a fortune whose father, or whoever it may be, catches a dangerous bronchitis every winter but invariably recovers and lives to ninety-one, while the heir survives him a month having been worn out with long expectation.

Sisyphus had never found any pleasure in life

comparable to the delight of seeing his stone bound down-hill, and in so timing its rush as to inflict the greatest possible scare on any unwary shade who might be wandering below. He got so great and such varied amusement out of this that his labour had become the automatism of reflex action – which is, I understand, the name applied by men of science to all actions that are done without reflection. He was a pompous, ponderous old gentleman, very irritable and always thinking that the other shades were laughing at him or trying to take advantage of him. There were two, however, whom he hated with a fury that tormented him far more seriously than anything else ever did. The first of these was Archimedes who had instituted a series of experiments in regard to various questions connected with mechanics and had conceived a scheme by which he hoped to utilise the motive power of the stone for the purpose of lighting Hades with electricity. The other was Agamemnon, who took good care to keep out of the stone's way when it was more than a quarter of the distance up the slope, but who delighted in teasing Sisyphus so long as he considered it safe to do so. Many of the other shades took daily pleasure in gathering together about stone-time to enjoy the fun and to bet on how far the stone would roll.

As for Tityus – what is a bird more or less on

a body that covers nine acres? He found the vultures a gentle stimulant to the liver without which it would have become congested.

Sir Isaac Newton was intensely interested in the hygrometric and barometric proceedings of the Danaids.

'At any rate,' said one of them to my informant, 'if we really are being punished, for goodness' sake don't say anything about it or we may be put to other work. You see, we must be doing something, and now we know how to do this, we don't want the bother of learning something new. You may be right, but we have not got to make our living by it, and what in the name of reason can it matter whether the sieves ever get full or not?'

My traveller reported much the same with regard to the eternal happiness on Mount Olympus. Hercules found Hebe a fool and could never get her off his everlasting knee. He would have sold his soul to find another Aegisthus.

So Jove saw all this and it set him thinking.

'It seems to me,' said he, 'that Olympus and Hades are both failures.'

Then he summoned a council and the whole matter was thoroughly discussed. In the end Jove abdicated, and the gods came down from Olympus and assumed mortality. They had some years of very enjoyable Bohemian existence going

about as a company of strolling players at French and Belgian town fairs; after which they died in the usual way, having discovered at last that it does not matter how high up or how low down you are, that happiness and misery are not absolute but depend on the direction in which you are tending and consist in a progression towards better or worse, and that pleasure, like pain and like everything that grows, holds in perfection but a little moment.

XI

RECONCILIATION

★

RELIGION

By religion I mean a living sense that man proposes and God disposes, that we must watch and pray that we enter not into temptation, that he who thinketh he standeth must take heed lest he fall, and the countless other like elementary maxims which a man must hold as he holds life itself if he is to be a man at all.

If religion, then, is to be formulated and made tangible to the people, it can only be by means of symbols, counters, and analogies, more or less misleading, for no man professes to have got to the root of the matter and to have seen the eternal underlying verity face to face – and even though he could see it he could not grip it and hold it and convey it to another who has not. Therefore either these feelings must be left altogether unexpressed and, if unexpressed, then soon undeveloped and atrophied, or they must be expressed by the help of images or idols – by the help of something not more actually true than a child's doll is to a child, but yet helpful to our weakness of understanding, as the doll no doubt gratifies and stimulates the motherly instinct in the child.

Therefore we ought not to cavil at the visible superstition and absurdity of much on which religion is made to rest, for the unknown can never be satisfactorily rendered into the known. To get the known from the unknown is to get something out of nothing, a thing which, though it is being done daily in every fraction of every second everywhere, is logically impossible of conception, and we can only think by logic, for what is not in logic is not in thought. So that the attempt to symbolise the unknown is certain to involve inconsistencies and absurdities of all kinds and it is childish to complain of their existence unless one is prepared to advocate the stifling of all religious sentiment, and this is like trying to stifle hunger or thirst. To be at all is to be religious more or less. There never was any man who did not feel that behind this world and above it and about it there is an unseen world greater and more incomprehensible than anything he can conceive, and this feeling, so profound and so universal, needs expression. If expressed it can only be so by the help of inconsistencies and errors. These, then, are not to be ordered impatiently out of court; they have grown up as the best guesses at truth that could be made at any given time, but they must become more or less obsolete as our knowledge of truth is enlarged. Things become known which were

formerly unknown and, though this brings us no nearer to ultimate universal truth, yet it shows us that many of our guesses were wrong. Everything that catches on to realism and naturalism as much as Christianity does must be affected by any profound modification in our views of realism and naturalism.

GOD AND CONVENIENCE

I do not know or care whether the expression 'God' has scientific accuracy or no, nor yet whether it has theological value; I know nothing either of one or the other, beyond looking upon the recognised exponents both of science and theology with equal distrust; but for convenience, I am sure that there is nothing like it – I mean for convenience of getting quickly at the right or wrong of a matter. While you are fumbling away with your political economy or your biblical precepts to know whether you shall let old Mrs. So-and-so have five shillings or no, another, who has just asked himself which would be most well-pleasing in the sight of God, will be told in a moment that he should give her – or not give her – the five shillings. As a general rule she had better have the five shillings at once, but sometimes we must give God to understand that, though we should be very glad to do what he

would have of us if we reasonably could, yet the present is one of those occasions on which we must decline to do so.

GOD IS LOVE

The theologian dreams of a God sitting above the clouds among the cherubim, who blow their loud uplifted angel trumpets before him, and humour him as though he were some despot in an Oriental tale; but we enthrone him upon the wings of birds, on the petals of flowers, on the faces of our friends, and upon whatever we most delight in of all that lives upon the earth. We then can not only love him, but we can do that without which love has neither power nor sweetness, but is a phantom only, an impersonal person, a vain stretching forth of arms towards something that can never fill them – we can express our love and have it expressed to us in return. And this not in the uprearing of stone temples – for the Lord dwelleth in temples made with other organs than hands – nor yet in the cleansing of our hearts, but in the caress bestowed upon horse and dog, and kisses upon the lips of those we love.

THE WORLD

Even the world, so *mondain* as it is, still holds instinctively and as a matter of faith unques-

tionable that those who have died by the altar are worthier than those who have lived by it, when to die was duty.

CHRIST AND THE WORLD

They are as incompatible now as ever to all good Christians. By Christ I do not mean the mere man Christ Jesus, but public spirit and straightforwardness as against selfishness and meanness. The whirligig of Time has so brought in his revenges that Christ and the Devil have changed places, and Christ has become but as one of the Kingdoms of this World.

BLASPHEMY

I begin to understand now what Christ meant when he said that blasphemy against the Holy Ghost was unforgivable, while speaking against the Son of Man might be forgiven. He must have meant that a man may be pardoned for being unable to believe in the Christian mythology, but that if he made light of that spirit which the common conscience of all men, whatever their particular creed, recognises as divine, there was no hope for him. No more there is.

GAINING ONE'S POINT

It is not he who gains the exact point in dispute who scores most in controversy, but he

who has shown the most forbearance and the better temper.

THE VOICE OF COMMON SENSE

It is this, and not the voice of the Lord, which maketh men to be of one mind in an house. But then, the voice of the Lord is the voice of common sense which is shared by all that is.

'AMENDES HONORABLES'

There is hardly an offence so great but if it be frankly apologised for it is easily both forgiven and forgotten. There is hardly an offence so small but it rankles if he who has committed it does not express proportionate regret. Expressions of regret help genuine regret and induce amendment of life, much as digging a channel helps water to flow, though it does not make the water. If a man refuses to make them and habitually indulges his own selfishness at the expense of what is due to other people, he is no better than a drunkard or a debauchee, and I have no more respect for him than I have for the others.

We all like to forgive, and we all love best not those who offend us least, nor those who have done most for us, but those who make it most easy for us to forgive them.

So a man may lose both his legs and live for years in health if the amputation has been clean

and skilful, whereas a pea in his boot may set up irritation which must last as long as the pea is there and may in the end kill him.

FORGIVENESS AND RETRIBUTION

It is no part of the bargain that we are never to commit trespasses. The bargain is that if we would be forgiven we must forgive them that trespass against us. Nor again is it part of the bargain that we are to let a man hob-nob with us when we know him to be a thorough blackguard, merely on the plea that unless we do so we shall not be forgiving him his trespasses. No hard and fast rule can be laid down; each case must be settled instinctively as it arises.

As a sinner I am interested in the principle of forgiveness; as sinned against, in that of retribution. I have what is to me a considerable vested interest in both these principles, but I should say I had more in forgiveness than in retribution. And so it probably is with most people or we should have had a clause in the Lord's prayer: 'And pay out those who have sinned against us as they whom we have sinned against generally pay us out.'

THE PARABLES

The people do not act reasonably in a single instance. The sower was a bad sower; the shep-

herd who left his ninety and nine sheep in the wilderness was a foolish shepherd; the husbandman who would not have his corn weeded was no farmer – and so on. None of them go nearly on all fours, they halt so much as to have neither literary nor moral value to any but slipshod thinkers.

Granted, but are we not all slipshod thinkers?

THE IRRELIGION OF ORTHODOXY

We do not fall foul of Christians for their religion, but for what we hold to be their want of religion – for the low views they take of God and of his glory, and for the unworthiness with which they try to serve him.

SOCIETY AND CHRISTIANITY

The burden of society is really a very light one. She does not require us to believe the Christian religion, she has very vague ideas as to what the Christian religion is, much less does she require us to practise it. She is quite satisfied if we do not obtrude our disbelief in it in an offensive manner. Surely this is no very grievous burden.

SANCTIFIED BY FAITH

No matter how great a fraud a thing may have been or be, if it has passed through many minds an aroma of life attaches to it and it must be handled with a certain reverence. A thing or a thought becomes hallowed if it has been long and strongly believed in, for veneration, after a time, seems to get into the thing venerated. Look at Delphi – fraud of frauds, yet sanctified by centuries of hope and fear and faith. If greater knowledge shows Christianity to have been founded upon error, still greater knowledge shows that it was aiming at a truth.

OURSELVES AND THE CLERGY

As regards the best of the clergy, whether English or foreign, I feel that they and we mean in substance the same thing, and that the difference is only about the way this thing should be put and the evidence on which it should be considered to rest.

We say that they jeopardise the acceptance of the principles which they and we alike cordially regard as fundamental by basing them on assertions which a little investigation shows to be untenable. They reply that by declaring the assertions to be untenable we jeopardise the principles. We answer that this is not so and that

moreover we can find better, safer, and more obvious assertions on which to base them.

LETTER AND SPIRIT

Does any man of science believe that the present orthodox faith can descend many generations longer without modification? Does any freethinker who has the ordinary feelings of an Englishman doubt that the main idea underlying and running through the ordinary orthodox faith is substantially sound?

That there is an unseen life and unseen kingdom which is not of this world, and that the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God; that the life we live here is much, but, at the same time, small as compared with another larger life in which we all share, though, while here, we can know little if anything about it; that there is an omnipresent Being into whose presence none can enter and from whose presence none can escape – an ineffable contradiction in terms; that the best are still unprofitable servants and that the wisest are still children – who that is in his senses can doubt these things? And surely they are more the essence of Christianity than a belief that Jesus Christ died, rose from the dead, and ascended visibly into heaven.

Technically and according to the letter they

are not; according to the spirit I firmly believe they are.

THE RULES OF LIFE

Whether it is right to say that one believes in God and Christianity without intending what one knows the hearer intends one to intend depends on how much or how little the hearer can understand. Life is not an exact science, it is an art. Just as the contention, excellent so far as it goes, that each is to do what is right in his own eyes leads, when ridden to death, to anarchy and chaos, so the contention that every one should be either self-effacing or truthful to the bitter end reduces life to an absurdity. If we seek real rather than technical truth, it is more true to be considerately untruthful within limits than to be inconsiderately truthful without them. What the limits are we generally know but cannot say.

There is an unbridgeable chasm between thought and words that we must jump as best we can, and it is just here that the two hitch on to one another. The higher rules of life transcend the sphere of language; they cannot be gotten by speech, neither shall logic be weighed for the price thereof. They have their being in the fear of the Lord and in the departing from evil, without even knowing in words what the Lord is, nor the fear of the Lord, nor yet evil.

Common straightforwardness and kindliness are the highest points that man or woman can reach, but they should no more be made matters of conversation than should the lowest vices. Extremes meet here as elsewhere and the extremes of vice and virtue are alike common and unmentionable.

There is nothing for it but a very humble hope that from the Great Unknown Source our daily insight and daily strength may be given us with our daily bread. And what is this but Christianity, whether we believe that Jesus Christ rose from the dead or not? So that Christianity is like a man's soul – he who finds may lose it and he who loses may find it.

If, then, a man may be a Christian while believing himself hostile to all that some consider most essential in Christianity, may he not also be a free-thinker (in the common use of the word) while believing himself hostile to free-thought?

XII

DEATH

★

FORE-KNOWLEDGE OF DEATH

No one thinks he will escape death, so there is no disappointment and, as long as we know neither the when nor the how, the mere fact that we shall one day have to go does not much affect us; we do not care, even though we know vaguely that we have not long to live. The serious trouble begins when death becomes definite in time and shape. It is in precise fore-knowledge, rather than in sin, that the sting of death is to be found; and such fore-knowledge is generally withheld; though, strangely enough, many would have it if they could.

CONTINUED IDENTITY

I do not doubt that a person who will grow out of me as I now am, but of whom I know nothing now and in whom therefore I can take none but the vaguest interest, will one day undergo so sudden and complete a change that his friends must notice it and call him dead; but as I have no definite ideas concerning this person, not knowing whether he will be a man of fifty-nine or seventy-nine or any age between these two, so this person will, I am sure, have forgotten the very existence of me as I am at this present

moment. If it is said that no matter how wide a difference of condition may exist between myself now and myself at the moment of death, or how complete the forgetfulness of connection on either side may be, yet the fact of the one having grown out of the other by an infinite series of gradations makes the second personally identical with the first, then I say that the difference between the corpse and the till recently living body is not great enough, either in respect of material change or of want of memory concerning the earlier existence, to bar personal identity and prevent us from seeing the corpse as alive and a continuation of the man from whom it was developed, though having tastes and other characteristics very different from those it had while it was a man.

From this point of view there is no such thing as death – I mean no such thing as the death which we have commonly conceived of hitherto. A man is much more alive when he is what we call alive than when he is what we call dead; but no matter how much he is alive, he is still in part dead, and no matter how much he is dead, he is still in part alive, and his corpse-hood is connected with his living body-hood by gradations which even at the moment of death are ordinarily subtle; and the corpse does not forget the living body more completely than the living body has forgotten a thousand or a hundred thousand of

its own previous states; so that we should see the corpse as a person, of greatly and abruptly changed habits it is true, but still of habits of some sort, for hair and nails continue to grow after death, and with an individuality which is as much identical with that of the person from whom it has arisen as this person was with himself as an embryo of a week old, or indeed more so.

If we have identity between the embryo and the octogenarian, we must have it also between the octogenarian and the corpse, and do away with death except as a rather striking change of thought and habit, greater indeed in degree than, but still, in kind, substantially the same as any of the changes which we have experienced from moment to moment throughout that fragment of existence which we commonly call our life; so that in sober seriousness there is no such thing as absolute death, just as there is no such thing as absolute life.

Either this, or we must keep death at the expense of personal identity, and deny identity between any two states which present considerable differences and neither of which has any fore-knowledge of, or recollection of the other. In this case, if there be death at all, it is some one else who dies and not we, because while we are alive we are not dead, and as soon as we are dead we are no longer ourselves.

So that it comes in the end to this, that either there is no such thing as death at all, or else that, if there is, it is some one else who dies and not we. We cannot blow hot and cold with the same breath. If we would retain personal identity at all, we must continue it beyond what we call death, in which case death ceases to be what we have hitherto thought it, that is to say, the end of our being. We cannot have both personal identity and death too.

COMPLETE DEATH

To die completely, a person must not only forget but be forgotten, and he who is not forgotten is not dead. This is as old as *non omnis moriar* and a great deal older, but very few people realise it.

LIFE AND DEATH

When I was young I used to think the only certain thing about life was that I should one day die. Now I think the only certain thing about life is that there is no such thing as death.

THE DEFEAT OF DEATH

There is nothing which at once affects a man so much and so little as his own death. It is a case in which the going-to-happen-ness of a thing

is of greater importance than the actual thing itself which cannot be of importance to the man who dies, for Death cuts his own throat in the matter of hurting people. As a bee that can sting once but in the stinging dies, so Death is dead to him who is dead already. While he is shaking his wings, there is *brutum fulmen* but the man goes on living, frightened, perhaps, but unhurt; pain and sickness may hurt him but the moment Death strikes him both he and Death are beyond feeling. It is as though Death were born anew with every man; the two protect one another so long as they keep one another at arm's length, but if they once embrace it is all over with both.

THE TORTURE OF DEATH

The fabled pains of Tantalus, Sisyphus, and all the rest of them show what an instinctive longing there is in all men both for end and endlessness of both good and ill, but as torture they are the merest mockery when compared with the fruitless chase to which poor Death has been condemned for ever and ever. Does it not seem as though he too must have committed some crime for which his sentence is to be for ever grasping after that which becomes non-existent the moment he grasps it? But then I suppose it would be with him as with the rest of the tortured, he must either die himself, which he has

not done, or become used to it and enjoy the frightening as much as the killing. Any pain through which a man can live at all becomes unfelt as soon as it becomes habitual. Pain consists not in that which is now endured but in the strong memory of something better that is still recent. And so, happiness lies in the memory of a recent worse and the expectation of a better that is to come soon.

IGNORANCE OF DEATH

i

The fear of death is instinctive because in so many past generations we have feared it. But how did we come to know what death is so that we should fear it? The answer is that we do not know what death is and that this is why we fear it.

ii

If a man know not life which he hath seen how shall he know death which he hath not seen?

iii

If a man has sent his teeth and his hair and perhaps two or three limbs to the grave before him, the presumption should be that, as he knows nothing further of these when they have once left him, so will he know nothing of the rest of him

when it too is dead. The whole may surely be argued from the parts.

iv

To write about death is to write about that of which we have had little practical experience. We can write about conscious life, but we have no consciousness of the deaths we daily die. Besides, we cannot eat our cake and have it. We cannot have *tabulae rasae* and *tabulae scriptae* at the same time. We cannot be at once dead enough to be reasonably registered as such, and alive enough to be able to tell people all about it.

v

There will come a supreme moment in which there will be care neither for ourselves nor for others, but a complete abandon, a *sans souci* of unspeakable indifference, and this moment will never be taken from us; time cannot rob us of it but, as far as we are concerned, it will last for ever and ever without flying. So that, even for the most wretched and most guilty, there is a heaven at last where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt and where thieves do not break through nor steal. To himself every one is an immortal: he may know that he is going to die, but he can never know that he is dead.

vi

If life is an illusion, then so is death – the greatest of all illusions. If life must not be taken too seriously – then so neither must death.

vii

The dead are often just as living to us as the living are, only we cannot get them to believe it. They can come to us, but till we die we cannot go to them. To be dead is to be unable to understand that one is alive.

DISSOLUTION

Death is the dissolving of a partnership, the partners to which survive and go elsewhere. It is the corruption or breaking up of that society which we have called Ourself. The corporation is at an end, both its soul and its body cease as a whole, but the immortal constituents do not cease and never will. The souls of some men transmigrate in great part into their children, but there is a large alloy in respect both of body and mind through sexual generation; the souls of other men migrate into books, pictures, music, or what not; and every one's mind migrates somewhere, whether remembered and admired or the reverse. The living souls of Handel, Shakespeare, Rembrandt, Giovanni Bellini, and

the other great ones appear and speak to us in their works with less alloy than they could ever speak through their children; but men's bodies disappear absolutely on death, except they be in some measure preserved in their children, and in so far as harmonics of all that has been remain.

On death we do not lose life, we only lose individuality; we live henceforth in others, not in ourselves. Our mistake has been in not seeing that death is indeed, like birth, a salient feature in the history of the individual, but one which wants exploding as the end of the individual, no less than birth wanted exploding as his beginning.

Dying is only a mode of forgetting. We shall see this more easily if we consider forgetting to be a mode of dying. So the ancients called their River of Death, Lethe – the River of Forgetfulness. They ought also to have called their River of Life, Mnemosyne – the River of Memory. We should learn to tune death a good deal flatter than according to received notions.

THE DISLIKE OF DEATH

We cannot like both life and death at once; no one can be expected to like two such opposite things at the same time; if we like life we must dislike death, and if we leave off disliking death we shall soon die. Death will always be more

avoided than sought; for living involves effort, perceived or unperceived, central or departmental, and this will only be made by those who dislike the consequences of not making it more than the trouble of making it. A race, therefore, which is to exist at all must be a death-disliking race, for it is only at the cost of death that we can rid ourselves of all aversion to the idea of dying, so that the hunt after a philosophy which shall strip death of its terrors is like trying to find the philosopher's stone which cannot be found and which, if found, would defeat its own object.

Moreover, as a discovery which should rid us of the fear of death would be the vainest, so also it would be the most immoral of discoveries, for the very essence of morality is involved in the dislike (within reasonable limits) of death. Morality aims at a maximum of comfortable life and a minimum of death; if then, a minimum of death and a maximum of life were no longer held worth striving for, the whole fabric of morality would collapse, as indeed we have it on record that it is apt to do among classes that from one cause or another have come to live in disregard and expectation of death.

However much we may abuse death for robbing us of our friends – and there is no one who is not sooner or later hit hard in this respect – yet time heals these wounds sooner than we like to own; if

the heyday of grief does not shortly kill outright, it passes; and I doubt whether most men, if they were to search their hearts, would not find that, could they command death for some single occasion, they would be more likely to bid him take than restore.

Moreover, death does not blight love as the accidents of time and life do. Even the fondest grow apart if parted; they cannot come together again, not in any closeness or for any long time. Can death do worse than this?

The memory of a love that has been cut short by death remains still fragrant though enfeebled but no recollection of its past can keep sweet a love that has dried up and withered through accidents of time and life.

XIII

THE LIFE OF THE WORLD TO COME

★

POSTHUMOUS LIFE

i

To try to live in posterity is to be like an actor who leaps over the footlights and talks to the orchestra.

ii

He who wants posthumous fame is as one who would entail land, and tie up his money after his death as tightly and for as long a time as possible. Still we each of us in our own small way try to get what little posthumous fame we can.

THE TEST OF FAITH

Why should we be so avid of honourable and affectionate remembrance after death? Why should we hold this the one thing worth living or dying for? Why should all that we can know or feel seem but a very little thing as compared with that which we never either feel or know? What a reversal of all the canons of action which commonly guide mankind is there not here? But however this may be, if we have faith in the life after death we can have little in that which is

before it, and if we have faith in this life we can have small faith in any other.

Nevertheless there is a deeply rooted conviction, even in many of those in whom its existence is least apparent, that honourable and affectionate remembrance after death with a full and certain hope that it will be ours is the highest prize to which the highest calling can aspire. Few pass through this world without feeling the vanity of all human ambitions; their faith may fail them here, but it will not fail them – not for a moment, never – if they possess it as regards posthumous respect and affection. The world may prove hollow but a well-earned good fame in death will never do so. And all men feel this whether they admit it to themselves or no.

Faith in this is easy enough. We are born with it. What is less easy is to possess one's soul in peace and not be shaken in faith and broken in spirit on seeing the way in which men crowd themselves, or are crowded, into honourable remembrance when, if the truth concerning them were known, no pit of oblivion should be deep enough for them. See, again, how many who have richly earned esteem never get it either before or after death. It is here that faith comes in. To see that the infinite corruptions of this life penetrate into and infect that which is to come, and yet to hold that even infamy after death,

with obscure and penurious life before it, is a prize which will bring a man more peace at the last than all the good things of this life put together and joined with an immortality as lasting as Virgil's, provided the infamy and failure of the one be unmerited, as also the success and immortality of the other. Here is the test of faith – will you do your duty with all your might at any cost of goods or reputation either in this world or beyond the grave? If you will – well, the chances are 100 to 1 that you will become a faddist, a vegetarian, and a teetotaller.

And suppose you escape this pitfall too. Why should you try to be so much better than your neighbours? Who are you to think you may be worthy of so much good fortune? If you do, you may be sure that you do not deserve it. . . .

And so on *ad infinitum*. Let us eat and drink neither forgetting nor remembering death unduly. The Lord hath mercy on whom he will have mercy and the less we think about it the better.

STARTING AGAIN 'AD INFINITUM'

A man from the cradle to the grave is but the embryo of a being that may be born into the world of the dead who still live, or that may die so soon after entering it as to be practically still-born. The greater number of the seeds shed, whether by plants or animals, never germinate

and of those that grow few reach maturity, so the greater number of those that reach death are still-born as regards the truest life of all – I mean the life that is lived after death in the thoughts and actions of posterity. Moreover of those who are born into and fill great places in this invisible world not one is immortal.

We should look on the body as the manifesto of the mind and on posterity as the manifesto of the dead that live after life. Each is the mechanism whereby the other exists.

Life, then, is not the having been born – it is rather an effort to be born. But why should some succeed in attaining to this future life and others fail? Why should some be born more than others? Why should not some one in a future state taunt Lazarus with having a good time now and tell him it will be the turn of Dives in some other and more remote hereafter? I must have it that neither are the good rewarded nor the bad punished in a future state, but every one must start anew quite irrespective of anything they have done here and must try his luck again and go on trying it again and again *ad infinitum*. Some of our lives, then, will be lucky and some unlucky and it will resolve itself into one long eternal life during which we shall change so much that we shall not remember our antecedents very far back (any more than we remember having

been embryos) nor foresee our future very much, and during which we shall have our ups and downs *ad infinitum* – effecting a transformation scene at once as soon as circumstances become unbearable.

Nevertheless, some men's work does live longer than others. Some achieve what is very like immortality. Why should they have this piece of good fortune more than others? The answer is that it would be very unjust if they knew anything about it, or could enjoy it in any way, but they know nothing whatever about it, and you, the complainer, do profit by their labour, so that it is really you, the complainer, who get the fun, not they, and this should stop your mouth. The only thing they got was a little hope, which buoyed them up often when there was but little else that could do so.

PREPARATION FOR DEATH

That there is a life after death is as palpable as that there is a life before death – see the influence that the dead have over us – but this life is no more eternal than our present life. Shakespeare and Homer may live long, but they will die some day, that is to say, they will become unknown as direct and efficient causes. Even so God himself dies, for to die is to change and to change is to die to what has gone before. If the units change the total must do so also.

As no one can say which egg or seed shall come to visible life and in its turn leave issue, so no one can say which of the millions of now visible lives shall enter into the after-life on death, and which have but so little life as practically not to count. For most seeds end as seeds or as food for some alien being, and so with lives, by far the greater number are sterile, except in so far as they can be devoured as the food of some stronger life. The Handels and Shakespeares are the few seeds that grow – and even these die.

And the same uncertainty attaches to posthumous life as to pre-lethal. As no one can say how long another shall live, so no one can say how long or how short a time a reputation shall live. The most unpromising weakly-looking creatures sometimes live to ninety while strong robust men are carried off in their prime. And no one can say what a man shall enter into life for having done. Roughly, there is a sort of moral government whereby those who have done the best work live most enduringly, but it is subject to such exceptions that no one can say whether or no there shall not be an exception in his own case either in his favour or against him.

THE WORLD

The world will, in the end, follow only those who have despised as well as served it.

JUDGING THE DEAD

The dead should be judged as we judge criminals, impartially, but they should be allowed the benefit of a doubt. When no doubt exists they should be hanged out of hand for about a hundred years. After that time they may come down and move about under a cloud. After about 2000 years they may do what they like. If Nero murdered his mother – well, he murdered his mother and there's an end. The moral guilt of an action varies inversely as the squares of its distances in time and space, social, psychological, physiological, or topographical, from ourselves. Not so its moral merit: this loses no lustre through time and distance.

Good is like gold, it will not rust or tarnish and it is rare, but there is some of it everywhere. Evil is like water, it abounds, is cheap, soon fouls, but runs itself clear of taint.

MYSELF AND MY BOOKS

Bodily offspring I do not leave, but mental offspring I do. Well, my books do not have to be sent to school and college and then insist on going into the Church or take to drinking or marry their mother's maid.

MY SON

I have often told my son that he must begin by finding me a wife to become his mother who shall

satisfy both himself and me. But this is only one of the many rocks on which we have hitherto split. We should never have got on together; I should have had to cut him off with a shilling either for laughing at Homer, or for refusing to laugh at him, or both, or neither, but still cut him off. So I settled the matter long ago by turning a deaf ear to his importunities and sticking to it that I would not get him at all. Yet his thin ghost visits me at times and, though he knows that it is no use pestering me further, he looks at me so wistfully and reproachfully that I am half-inclined to turn tail, take my chance about his mother, and ask him to let me get him after all. But I should show a clean pair of heels if he said 'Yes.'

Besides, he would probably be a girl.

I FALL ASLEEP IN THE FULL AND CERTAIN HOPE
THAT MY SLUMBER SHALL NOT BE BROKEN
AND THAT THOUGH I BE ALL-FORGETTING
YET SHALL I NOT BE ALL-FORGOTTEN
BUT CONTINUE THAT LIFE IN THE THOUGHTS AND
DEEDS OF THOSE I LOVED
INTO WHICH WHILE THE POWER TO STRIVE WAS
YET VOUCHSAFED ME I FONDLY STROVE TO ENTER

POEMS

★

A PSALM OF MONTREAL

The City of Montreal is one of the most rising and, in many respects, most agreeable on the American continent, but its inhabitants are as yet too busy with commerce to care greatly about the masterpieces of old Greek Art. In the Montreal Museum of Natural History I came upon two plaster casts, one of the Antinous and the other of the Discobolus – not the good one, but in my poem, of course, I intend the good one – banished from public view to a room where were all manner of skins, plants, snakes, insects, etc., and, in the middle of these, an old man stuffing an owl.

'Ah,' said I, 'so you have some antiques here; why don't you put them where people can see them?'

'Well, sir,' answered the custodian, 'you see they are rather vulgar.'

He then talked a great deal and said his brother did all Mr. Spurgeon's printing.

The dialogue – perhaps true, perhaps imaginary, perhaps a little of the one and a little of the other – between the writer and this old man gave rise to the lines that follow:

Stowed away in a Montreal lumber room
The Discobolus standeth and turneth his face to the wall;
Dusty, cobweb-covered, maimed, and set at naught,
Beauty crieth in an attic and no man regardeth:
O God! O Montreal!

Beautiful by night and day, beautiful in summer and winter,
Whole or maimed, always and alike beautiful –
He preacheth gospel of grace to the skins of owls
And to one who seasoneth the skins of Canadian owls:

O God! O Montreal!

When I saw him I was wroth and I said, 'O Discobolus!
Beautiful Discobolus, a Prince both among gods and men!
What doest thou here, how camest thou hither, Discobolus,
Preaching gospel in vain to the skins of owls?'

O God! O Montreal!

And I turned to the man of skins and said unto him, 'O thou man of skins,
Wherefore hast thou done thus to shame the beauty of the Discobolus?'
But the Lord had hardened the heart of the man of skins
And he answered, 'My brother-in-law is haberdasher to Mr. Spurgeon.'

O God! O Montreal!

'The Discobolus is put here because he is vulgar,
He has neither vest nor pants with which to cover his limbs;
I, Sir, am a person of most respectable connections –
My brother-in-law is haberdasher to Mr. Spurgeon.'
O God! O Montreal!

Then I said, 'O brother-in-law to Mr. Spurgeon's haberdasher,
Who seasonest also the skins of Canadian owls,
Thou callest trousers "pants," whereas I call them "trousers,"
Therefore thou art in hell-fire and may the Lord pity thee!'
O God! O Montreal!

'Preferrest thou the gospel of Montreal to the gospel of Hellas,
The gospel of thy connection with Mr. Spurgeon's haberdashery to the gospel of the Discobolus?'
Yet none the less blasphemed he beauty saying, 'The Discobolus hath no gospel,
But my brother-in-law is haberdasher to Mr. Spurgeon.'
O God! O Montreal!

THE RIGHTEOUS MAN

The righteous man will rob none but the defenceless,
Whatsoever can reckon with him he will neither plunder nor kill;
He will steal an egg from a hen or a lamb from an ewe,
For his sheep and his hens cannot reckon with him hereafter –
They live not in any odour of defencefulness:
Therefore right is with the righteous man, and he taketh advantage righteously,
Praising God and plundering.

The righteous man will enslave his horse and his dog,
Making them serve him for their bare keep and for nothing further,
Shooting them, selling them for vivisection when they can no longer profit him,
Backbiting them and beating them if they fail to please him;
For his horse and his dog can bring no action for damages,
Wherefore, then, should he not enslave them, shoot them, sell them for vivisection?

But the righteous man will not plunder the defenceful –
Not if he be alone and unarmed – for his conscience will smite him;
He will not rob a she-bear of her cubs, nor an eagle of her eaglets –
Unless he have a rifle to purge him from the fear of sin:
Then may he shoot rejoicing in innocency – from ambush or a safe distance;
Or he will beguile them, lay poison for them, keep no faith with them;
For what faith is there with that which cannot reckon hereafter,
Neither by itself, nor by another, nor by any residuum of ill consequences?
Surely, where weakness is utter, honour ceaseth.

Nay, I will do what is right in the eyes of him who can harm me,
And not in those of him who cannot call me to account.
Therefore yield me up thy pretty wings, O humming-bird!
Sing for me in a prison, O lark!
Pay me thy rent, O widow! for it is mine.
Where there is reckoning there is sin,
And where there is no reckoning sin is not.

TO CRITICS AND OTHERS

O Critics, Cultured Critics!
Who will praise me after I am dead,
Who will see in me both more and less than I intended,
But who will swear that whatever it was it was all perfectly right:
You will think you are better than the people who, when I was alive, swore that whatever I did was wrong,
And damned my books for me as fast as I could write them;
But you will not be better, you will be just the same, neither better nor worse,
And you will go for some future Butler as your fathers have gone for me:
Oh, how I should have hated you!

But you, Nice People!
Who will be sick of me because the critics thrust me down your throats,
But who would take me willingly enough if you were not bored about me,
Or if you could have the cream of me – and surely this should suffice:
Please remember that, if I were living, I should be upon your side,

And should hate those who imposed me either on myself or others;

Therefore, I pray you, neglect me, burlesque me, boil me down, do whatever you like with me,

But do not think that, if I were living, I should not aid and abet you:

There is nothing that even Shakespeare would enjoy more than a good burlesque of *Hamlet*.

IN MEMORIAM
FEB. 14TH, 1895
TO
H.R.F.

Out, out, out into the night,
With the wind bitter North East and the sea rough:
You have a racking cough and your lungs are weak,
But out, out into the night you go,
So guide you and guard you Heaven and fare you well!

We have been three lights to one another and now we are two,
For you go far and alone into the darkness;
But the light in you was stronger and clearer than ours,

For you came straighter from God and, whereas
we had learned,
You had never forgotten. Three minutes more
and then
Out, out into the night you go,
So guide you and guard you Heaven and
fare you well!

Never a cross look, never a thought,
Never a word that had better been left unspoken;
We gave you the best we had, such as it was,
It pleased you well, for you smiled and nodded
your head;
And now, out, out into the night you go,
So guide you and guard you Heaven and
fare you well!

You said we were a little weak that the three of
us wept,
Are we then weak if we laugh when we are glad?
When men are under the knife let them roar as
they will,
So that they flinch not.
Therefore let tears flow on, for so long as we live
No such second sorrow shall ever draw nigh us,
Till one of us two leaves the other alone
And goes out, out, out into the night,
So guard the one that is left, O God, and
fare him well!

Yet for the great bitterness of this grief
We three, you and he and I,
May pass into the hearts of like true comrades
hereafter,
In whom we may weep anew and yet comfort
them,
As they too pass out, out, out into the night,
So guide them and guard them Heaven and
fare them well!

* * *

The minutes have flown and he whom we loved
is gone,
The like of whom we never again shall see;
The wind is heavy with snow and the sea rough,
He has a racking cough and his lungs are weak.
Hand in hand we watch the train as it glides
Out, out, out into the night.
So take him into thy holy keeping, O Lord,
And guide him and guard him ever, and
fare him well!

A PRAYER

Searcher of souls, you who in heaven abide,
To whom the secrets of all hearts are open,
Though I do lie to all the world beside,
From me to you no falsehood shall be spoken.
Cleanse me not, Lord, I say, from secret sin
But from those faults which he who runs may see;

'Tis these that torture me, O Lord, begin
With these and let the hidden vices be;
If you must cleanse these too, at any rate
Deal with the seen sins first, 'tis only reason,
They being so gross, to let the others wait
The leisure of some more convenient season;
And cleanse not all, even then; leave me a few,
I would not be, not quite, so pure as you.

Μέλλοντα ταῦτα

Not on sad Stygian shore, nor in clear sheen
Of far Elysian plain, shall we meet those
Among the dead whose pupils we have been,
Nor those great shades whom we have held as foes;
No meadow of asphodel our feet shall tread,
Nor shall we look each other in the face
To love or hate each other being dead,
Hoping some praise, or fearing some disgrace.
We shall not argue saying "Twas thus' or 'Thus,'
Our argument's whole drift we shall forget;
Who's right, who's wrong, 'Twill be all one to us;
We shall not even know that we have met.
Yet meet we shall, and part, and meet again,
Where dead men meet, on lips of living men.

END